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THE
AFTERNOON LECTURES ON
LITERATURE & ART.



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S. STEPHEN'S GREEN, DUBLIN,
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P R E F A C E .



UNING to unavoidable circumstances, the usual annual volume of Afternoon Lectures was not published in the year 1867.

The present volume, being the fifth published by the Committee, contains the greater number of the Dublin Afternoon Lectures, delivered during the years 1867 and 1868, a few only omitted which, in the interval between their delivery and the publication of this volume, had appeared in the form of articles in various periodicals, or were incorporated in works published by their respective authors.

The Committee beg to offer their thanks to the Gentlemen who have contributed Lectures to this Volume, and also to the authorities of the Royal College of Science, S. Stephen's Green, who kindly gave the use of their Theatre for the Afternoon Lectures of the present and the former years.

ROBERT H. MARTLEY,
Hon. Sec.

14 Hatch Street, Dublin,
December, 1868.



AFTERNOON LECTURES ON
LITERATURE.

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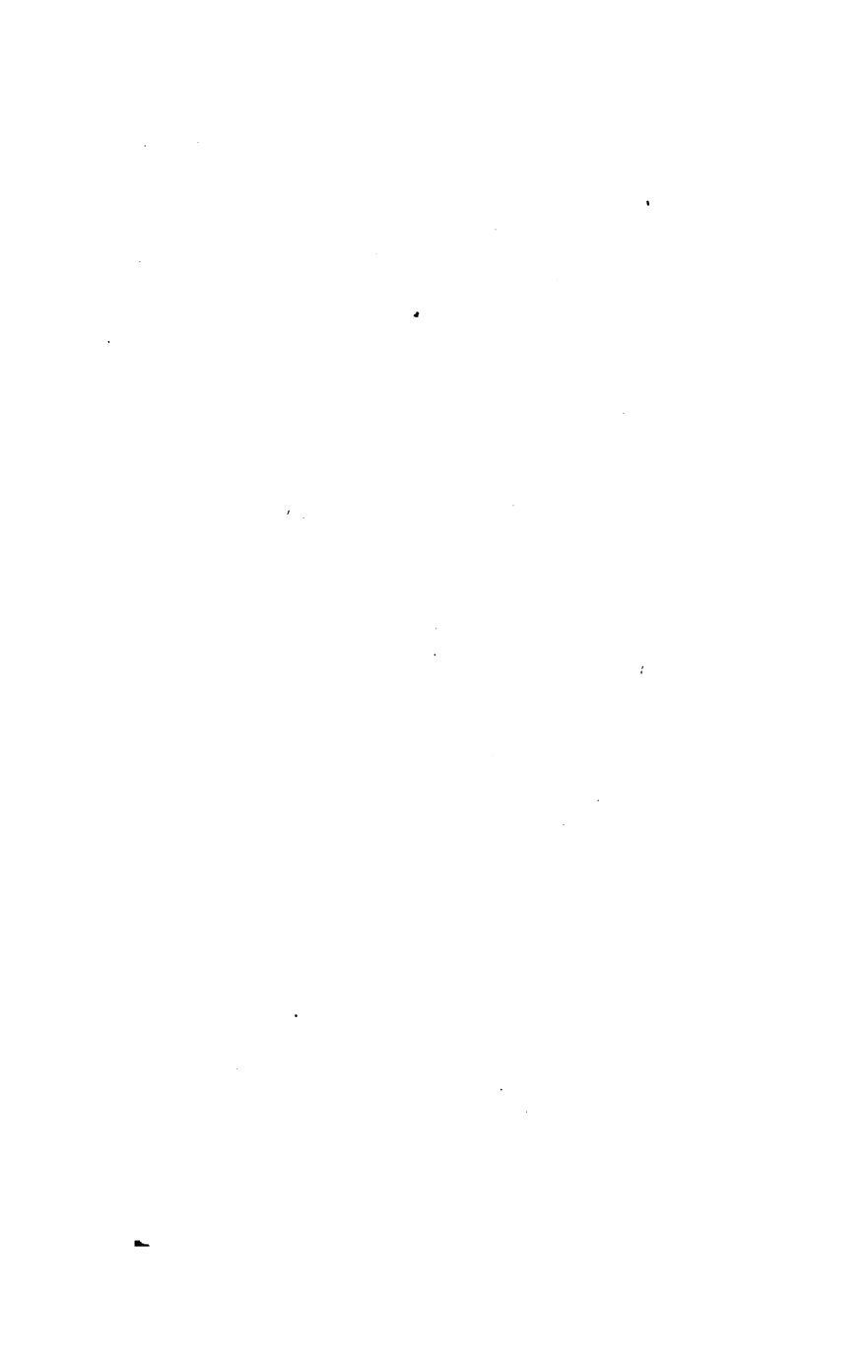
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THREE EPOCHS
IN THE
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANCIENT
GREEKS.

BY

JOHN P. MAHAFFY, A. M.,
FELLOW AND TUTOR OF TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN.





THREE EPOCHS
IN THE
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANCIENT
GREEKS.

THERE can be no doubt that the most delicate features in our modern civilization are due, not to the legacies left us by the Greeks and the Romans, but to the romantic nature of our Germanic ancestors. Honour among men, dignity among women, are known to have existed among them even when they lived as barbarians in their primeval forests. But though it cannot be said that the Greeks possessed these higher social feelings at all so much as the Germans in proportion to their other refinement, surely the most perfect civilization of the ancient world—perhaps of any period of the world, cannot have failed to develop some of the more subtle and delicate graces in our modern life. Yet the extraordinary genius and attainments of the ancient Greeks are, I think, more generally acknowledged than appreciated amongst us. Their ideas have been so universally adopted and imitated, that we are now often unconscious of our

obligations, and mistake for our own what we have borrowed. Yet where have we not borrowed from them? Their political history, which has occupied many of the greatest living writers in our own day, has afforded a model for the Republic of America, the last great constitution the world has seen framed among its nations. Their architecture, while it afforded the noblest types for the public buildings of many centuries, has been even travestied most painfully with unsuitable materials, for unsuitable purposes, and in an unsuitable atmosphere, by the builders of churches during the past century, and of houses in every modern city. Their sculpture, while it stimulated the genius of a Canova, has led smaller minds to desperate attempts at combining the ungainly dress of the present day with the graceful folds of classic drapery—attempts which disfigure the principal thoroughfares of this and other cities. Nor is the fashionable milliner, when she racks her brains to change the just established fashion, independent of these great masters of grace and refinement. In short, the civilization of the ancient Greeks has influenced not merely every description of modern art, philosophy, and literature, but even every grade and rank in society.

But while the artistic results they attained are so familiar to us all, the greatest ignorance prevails concerning their society and their private life; for even in most of the works published on the subject, where there are numerous details concerning the material part of their private life, its moral aspect

has been as yet imperfectly discussed. What was there in those days corresponding to our notions of gentlemanly conduct, and of honour, of courtesy towards the aged and the weaker sex, of delicacy and of tact in society? What, in fact, was the history of the higher sentiments among the ancient Greeks? This is the special subject I am now about to introduce to your notice. But unfortunately our information is very defective: it consists wholly in stray hints, in accidental allusions made by contemporary writers and artists—poets, politicians, philosophers, and painters. To gather together and weld into a connected discourse these scattered fragments, is no easy task, and must claim your special indulgence.

I. Of the three epochs which I have chosen from the thousand years of Greek civilization, as affording striking mutual contrasts, and as being each depicted by a great contemporary author, the Homeric stands first in order of time, and, perhaps, of interest; for there is a subtle charm about antiquity itself which chains the refined taste with a strange spell of interest. The simplest social picture, which excites no notice in our own day, becomes curious and fascinating if you move it back a hundred generations; but let it be preserved to us from the cradle of the world's history, and it is toned with a mellow light, which clothes its commonest features in grace and poetry,

“So fresh, so strange the days that are no more.”

And besides, the society of historical Greece pos-

sesses not a tittle of the romance or the sentiment found in the Homeric heroes and heroines. Even the later and more civilized Greeks looked back with respect and affection to these glorious days, and quoted Homer as the model of good breeding and refinement. And this is the real point of interest in his writings ; for, in our day, no amount of luxury and refinement in material life would be accepted as a proof of high civilization. The use of silver and of gold, wrought by the cunning workman ; of robes of divers textures, dyed with Phœnician purple ; the use even of amber, imported from the distant Baltic ; the luxuries of sponges and of warm baths—all such things, constantly alluded to in the Homeric poems, are yet consistent with great barbarism. We desire to find among them not merely the implements, but the sentiments of civilized men. And as war was their chief occupation, let us examine their notions of honour and of fair play, as well as of humanity and of respect towards the weak.

But remember that we have to do with a people naturally neither very courageous nor very honest. No doubt, it seems very strange to say that a people constantly occupied in war were failing in personal courage. Nevertheless it is true ; for not only among nations, but among individuals, you may have observed that the most pugnacious and quarrelsome are by no means the bravest. And in the case of the Greeks, there is ample evidence throughout their history that they were not brave in the sense applied to the heroes of chivalry and the soldiers of our own

armies. With the two exceptions of Diomedes and Ulysses—which can be accounted for on special grounds, all Homer's heroes are represented as running away on various occasions, and as running away too under the influence of panic. Still worse, the noblest heroes are said by Ulysses to have been weeping and lamenting with fright when they were about to be concealed within the celebrated horse, just before the capture of Troy; and Achilles is highly delighted, and stalks in great strides down the meadow of Asphodel when he hears that his son was the solitary exception, and showed no signs of terror and of despair. Of course, the gods are usually called in to account for such panics by the courtly poet, whose songs were recited to the descendants of these chiefs. But still the facts are there; and the same thing occurs constantly throughout all Greek history, except in the case of the highly-disciplined Spartans.

No doubt, many important circumstances can be urged in palliation of this defect in the Homeric chiefs. There was, of course, want of discipline and of the support of masses. There was also a great sensitiveness in Greek human nature, which causes men to picture to themselves vividly the pains of death, and to shrink from them, while the dulness of coarser natures protects them from such anticipations. But, above all, the Homeric Greek had nothing to hope for after this life had passed away. He believed, indeed, in a future state, and the poet has not omitted to give us a picture of that

state. But profoundly interesting as is this picture—one of our earliest evidences of the belief in immortality—there is no more melancholy passage in all the story ; for while the heroes retain all their intellect and their capacities, their powers of joy and of suffering, of love and of hate, they have no new aims nor employments, nor even hopes ; and while their strength and their beauty are but dim reflections of their former selves, and their voices fainter than the husky tones of decrepid old age, their only pleasure is to live over again in memory the glory of their life on earth, and to catch with breathless interest the stray echoes that reach them from the upper world. We cannot, then, expect from them the courage of the Christian warrior.

And perhaps it is to some extent a consequence of this, that they were not a very honest nation ; for the two defects are likely to be connected in the same character. I do not mean to say merely that in this age of imperfect civilization the rights of property were not fully recognized : this would have been a defect of the Homeric age, and not of the people. We find in Homer piracy alluded to as quite a respectable occupation ; and, indeed, the national fancy for this profession has never since disappeared, for it existed even during the most civilized period of Greek history, under the designation of maritime enterprise and love of adventure. But quite apart from the defects of the age, we must notice an inherent imperfection in the Greek national character—an imperfection which developed itself terribly in later Greek

history, and was, doubtless, the main cause of the decay of the nation : I mean the overrating of intellectual, as compared with moral, qualities. We shall find this defect so magnified at a later epoch, that cleverness is openly preferred to honesty.

In the Homeric age, it seems as if the analysis of mental qualities into intellectual and moral had hardly been felt or stated. There is no hero singled out for moral qualities only—there is not even a Homeric expression for a morally good man, as such. King Menelaus, who is, perhaps, the most honourable and chivalrous of all the chiefs in sentiment, is only a second-rate character, because he has not the physical power of Achilles or the intellect of Ulysses ; and this latter, Homer's greatest human hero, is above his fellows "in stratagem and in the use of the oath." The words used to be translated—plausibly enough, too—"in knavery and perjury," and this must have been the rendering in the minds even of the Attic tragedians. But Homer seems to have meant that he not only knew the best means of taking advantage of his enemies, but also of guarding against treacherous retaliation, by compelling or inducing them to bind themselves by an oath ; for, as might be expected, the honour of that day had a purely religious foundation. The gods hated deceit and treachery, when it was obtruded upon their notice ; but within certain limits, and in purely human transactions, where the wrath of the gods was not apprehended, deceit was lawful, and even praiseworthy ; for I do not think that the Homeric Greek considered a dishonourable

action as an injury done to the dignity of his nature in his own eyes. This very subtle, but now common, notion of our own personal dignity, and our duties towards it, had, I think, no place in the minds of these primitive men ; perhaps, indeed, its existence, or at least its prevalence amongst us, may be due wholly to Germanic sentiment, deepened and ennobled by Christianity. The Homeric chief would not commit acts of cowardice or perjury, because he was ashamed of his family and friends, or because the gods would punish him ; but the social and religious basis of the feeling of honour was, so to speak, an external or foreign basis, and not founded upon the dignity with which a man feels bound to treat his own nature.

Nor were the claims of others upon him the claims of human nature as such, but the personal claims of special persons. His honour, his compassion, his respect, were all individual ties, which bound him to individual men, and which were, in almost all cases, secured by an oath ; even the helpless suppliant is afraid to venture into a stranger's house, without flying to the hearth, and so obtaining a sacred claim upon the protection of his host.

After all these limitations and restrictions, you will, perhaps, not be prepared to hear that the sense of honour was highly developed among the Homeric Greeks ; yet it was so, at least among that limited class brought before us in the old epic poems—the military and social aristocracy of the day. The instances of this feeling are many and striking. The

whole plot of the *Iliad*, for example, turns upon the satisfaction of the wounded honour of Achilles. He has been publicly treated with indignity by Agamemnon, and he is determined not only to exact a public apology and satisfaction for it, but also to make his opponent suffer bitterly. Yet this is not the highest, nor even a high, conception of honour, though it actuated so great a hero; for there is something insensate in making a whole army suffer for the blunders of its chief. There are far nobler and purer examples of honour in other parts of the poems. When Ulysses returns to his home disguised as a beggar, and finds the suitors of his wife wasting his goods and persecuting his family, he is first recognised, accidentally, by his faithful old nurse Euryclea, who forthwith offers to act as informer against the unfaithful members of his household: there is evidence of the highest and most gentlemanly feeling in the way in which Ulysses rejects her offer, and says that he will find out these things for himself.*

Time forbids my quoting and illustrating the subject with anecdotes as I should wish, but there is one remarkable passage which I must not omit, as it illustrates the feeling of honour and fair play in games and sports—a peculiarity which is now a distinctive mark of the English people. There is a chariot race described at length in the 23rd book of the *Iliad*,† in which we are concerned with four competitors, whom I mention in the order of the betting—

* *Odyssey*, xix. 500.

† *Iliad*, xxiii. 333, sqq. (Lord Derby's Trans.)

Eumelus, Diomedes, King Menelaus, and Antilochus. It was allowed by all that Eumelus' horses were far the best, but nevertheless his chariot breaks down during the race, and he loses all chance of a prize. Accordingly Diomedes comes in an easy winner, but there is a sharp contest between Menelaus and Antilochus; they are running neck-and-neck, when they come to a narrow part of the course, into which Antilochus dashes, knowing that Menelaus is timid, and afraid of a collision. Menelaus calls out to him to forbear until they have reached open ground, but Antilochus pretends not to hear him; so the cautious king pulls up, with a protest that Antilochus shall not carry off the second prize without taking an oath that he drove fairly. While the chariots are still in the distance, some betting goes on at what we may call the grand stand, but is repressed gently by Achilles, who acts as umpire, because the chiefs begin to lose their tempers. Presently Diomedes comes in first, Antilochus second, King Menelaus third, and the favourite, Eumelus, last. Achilles, moved with pity at his wretched plight, proposes, with great courtesy, to award him the second prize, as everybody acknowledged his horses to be the best. To this most unconstitutional proceeding Antilochus objects, tells Achilles he may give any present he likes to Eumelus, but as for the second prize, which was fairly won, he should only resign it with his life. Achilles accordingly cedes the point, and gives Eumelus a handsome present, to console him for his misfortune.

But hereupon Menelaus interferes, and protests

that he was jostled by Antilochus ; but mark, he does not propose to refer the case to umpires, but merely asks Antilochus to take a solemn oath before the gods that he did not intentionally play foul. I quote the rest of the story from Lord Derby's translation :—

“ To whom, Antilochus, with prudent speech—
Have patience with me yet, for I, O king !
O Menelaus, am thy junior far ;
My elder and superior, thee, I own.
Thou knowest the o'er eager vehemence of youth ;
How quick in temper, and in judgment weak ;
Set then thine heart at ease, the mare I won
I freely give, and, if aught else of mine
Thou shouldst desire, would sooner give it all
Than all my life be lowered, illustrious king,
In thine esteem, and sin against the gods.
Thus saying, noble Nestor's son led forth,
And placed in Menelaus' hands the mare.
The monarch's soul was melted like the dew
That glitters on the ears of growing corn
That bristle o'er the plain, even so thy soul,
O Menelaus, melted at his speech,
To whom were thus addressed thy winged words :
Antilochus, at once I lay aside
My anger—thou art prudent, and not apt
To be thus led astray ; but now, thy youth
Thy judgment hath o'erpowered, seek not henceforth,
By trickery, o'er thine elders to prevail.
To any other man, of all the Greeks,
I scarce as much had yielded ; but, for that
Thyself hast laboured much, and much endured—
Thou, thy good sire, and brother, in my cause,
I yield me to thy prayers, and give to boot
The mare, though mine of right, that these may know
I am not of a harsh unyielding mood.”

You see in this narrative, a solemn oath taking exactly the place of a gentleman's word of honour in modern times ; and you also see that word of honour trusted under circumstances which would hardly satisfy the frequenters of modern race-courses. The whole story, indeed, illustrates, not only the Homeric notion of honour and fair play, but also that of politeness and regard for the feelings of others, to which I next invite your attention.

However rude these heroes may have been to their inferiors, among themselves they had a very strict code of gentlemanly conduct. At these very games, from which I have just cited a scene, there occurs another even more prominent example of true politeness. Agamemnon, though the king of men, and commander of all the forces, was not a hero of great valour or ability, and had therefore not been bold enough to compete with his subordinate chiefs for the prizes, as he could ill afford to be defeated. He had, moreover, just before been humiliated, and forced to apologise to Achilles. Accordingly, this most gentlemanly hero, fearing that the great king would feel slighted by the result, proposes an apparently sham contest with the spear, and when the competitors start up, declares, there is no use in wasting time in the combat, as every body knows that Agamemnon is superior to all, and forthwith presents him with the first prize. What a graceful and delicate act of politeness! So, also, we find the chivalrous Menelaus, when Telemachus has been staying on a visit with him, and presently desires to depart, telling him, that he will

not press him excessively to stay. He thinks it as ill-bred to annoy your friends with excessive solicitations, as it is to give them a cold welcome. If Telemachus will stay, he will be delighted ; but if he desires to go, he must not be thwarted in his wishes. This may seem a trifling point, but is it not a striking proof of good breeding, even in the present day.

There are, however, conditions of civilization, where men have consideration for the feelings of equals, but not for those of inferiors, and we justly regard it as the highest test of refinement, to find in the relations of men toward the lower classes and the weaker sex, that delicacy and respect, which they justly claim but cannot enforce. And the Homeric hero may safely submit even to this test. The relations between masters and servants, in the sketches of household life left us by Homer, afford a very pleasing picture. Gentle consideration and indulgence on the part of the masters, is requited by enduring faithfulness and affection on the part of the servants. And among the crimes of the suitors of Penelope, which the poet evidently details, in order to satisfy his hearers with their awful punishment, their insulting conduct towards servants and towards mendicants, is, perhaps, that on which he most depends to excite a strong aversion against them. But even these lawless suitors of Penelope, who lived in rude riot and wanton wassail in her absent lord's palace, are hushed in respectful silence, when the queen appears in the hall, attended by her handmaidens. And, if such was the force of society upon lawless and godless

men, what must have been the influence of the same forces upon a hero of refinement and piety, like Ulysses. Nothing, in any age or any poem, can exceed the delicate politeness of his conduct towards the ladies and chiefs of the Phæakians, upon whose shores he was cast, a naked and desolate exile ; nor are they wanting in the same excellent qualities.

He first meets with the princess Nausikaa and her maidens, who are occupied washing clothes in the river.* The maidens fly at the sight of the naked hero ; but the princess, with greater dignity, waits to hear his story. His delicacy forbids him to fall at her knees, as was usual for suppliants, and he addresses her from a distance, in a strain of the most courteous flattery. Nausikaa, perceiving that he is no ordinary man, calls back her maidens, and apologises for their idle fears. She gives him food and raiment, and proposes to drive him home to the palace ; for the beauty and dignity of the hero have made a deep impression upon her. But she objects to driving with him through the city, as she fears gossip, which may arise from her being seen in company with a handsome stranger ; and indeed, she herself objects to young girls mixing too freely in society before they are married. So she requests him to leave her when they approach the town, and directs him how to find his way to the palace. He enters as a suppliant, and obtains the favour of King Alkinous and his princes. After the manner of the age, they give him supper, and propose, that after he has had a night's

* Cf. *Odyssey*, lib. vi.

rest, that he shall tell them who he is, and what were his adventures. But when the chiefs have departed, and Ulysses is left alone with the king and queen, while the attendants are clearing the supper-table, the queen Arete cannot refrain from forestalling the inquiries reserved for the next morning, inasmuch as she observes that the stranger has, somehow, got one of her best suits of apparel on his back. And when he tells his story, and Alkinous censures his daughter for not driving him straight home, he answers, with a most generous falsehood—"Do not blame the fair damsel, she wished to bring me home herself, but I objected; for I thought you might be offended at my taking such liberties." But when the impulsive monarch proceeds forthwith to offer him his daughter in marriage, if he prefer it to being sent home, the hero, in his reply, most delicately ignores altogether the proposal, apparently regarding it as a piece of rash hospitality, and feeling that silence would be more polite than a refusal.

I choose this incident almost at random from the narrative, and shall add but one more, which seems to me particularly poetic in its conception. Ulysses, loaded with honours and with presents among the Phæakians, is preparing for his departure. Not all the luxury of the happy island can obliterate the recollections of his home, nor can the beautiful Nausikaa efface the image of his faithful Penelope. The hero is indeed the object of so much attention among the king and his chiefs, that the poor maiden is almost forgotten. But as Ulysses is passing into the

hall, he meets her in his way, leaning against the doorpost, and she plaintively addresses him—"Farewell, stranger, and may you remember me in your home, seeing that you owe me a debt for your safety." In these few words Homer has painted not only the maiden's love, but a consequent feeling of jealousy at being neglected, and her disappointment at his departure. And the courtly hero, who feels his difficult position, answers—"So may the gods restore me to my country, and I will daily pay you devotions like the immortal gods; for you," he concludes, "have made me to live, O lady." And forthwith he passes on, and takes his seat among the chiefs, and we leave Nausikaa standing at the threshold, never to behold her again. But if I read aright the spirit of the Homeric age, her further history would not have shown a form wasting with love, like that of the lily maid of Astolat; for we do not hear in those primitive days of ladies breaking their hearts for the love of their knights. To the Homeric hero sentiment was ever present, but sentimentality was unknown, and was it not well? The parting of Lancelot from Elaine is doubtless more tragic, but is it more beautiful or more true than the brighter, healthier Homeric picture?

I have said enough to show you how perfect an idea of politeness the Homeric Greeks had among themselves, but, like many similar aristocracies in later days, this feeling was limited to particular persons and circumstances. To an enemy, to a barbarian, to an unfaithful servant, nay, even sometimes to a

mere stranger, the great men of those days often showed the most savage and cruel spirit. When this very Ulysses, for example, of whom we are speaking, returns home, and slays the wanton suitors who were wasting his substance and persecuting his family, Homer describes him, with evident satisfaction, taking fearful vengeance on his unfaithful servants. He mutilates his goat-herd, and causes twelve maid-servants, with great indignity, to be hanged in a row in the palace court. And observe the solitary remark of the poet on the execution—"They kicked about with their feet for a little while, but not very long."*

In ordinary warfare, too, there were limits prescribed by the laws of honour; for example, the use of poisoned weapons is described as hateful to the gods,† and does not actually occur in any of the poems; but the mutilation of slain enemies is common, and human sacrifices are even offered up by Achilles at the tomb of his friend. The treatment, too, of captives, affords Homer material for his most pathetic descriptions. Observe the simile which he uses to express the bitterness of Ulysses' tears—"As when a woman finds her husband who has been slain before the wall of his city, warding off the evil day from his house and nation, and when she sees him gasping in death, she utters piercing cries, and falls prostrate to embrace him, but they, with rude blows of the spear upon her back and shoulders, force her away into slavery, to a life of labour and of lamentation." So Andromache bewails in strains, which

* *Odyssey*, xxii. 473.

† *Odyssey*, i. 260.

even now bring tears to our eyes, the sad lot of her orphan boy, the insults and destitution to which he will be subject, because his natural protector is gone.* So, too, in very similar language does Achilles lament the condition of his father, whose advanced age disabled him from guarding against injustice and violence, and he longs to be with him, to avenge him upon the ruthless oppressor, who will plunder and dishonour him. No picture of the times is complete without these dark shadows, these glaring contrasts.

And there is yet one point which I must not omit about these heroes. Even in their noblest acts, in their generosity, in their self-denial, there appears constantly a very disagreeable shrewdness. To express the thing in suitable language, they seem always to have had "an eye to business." Great as was their hospitality when a stranger came to them, who, they exclaim, would think of inviting a man spontaneously to his house, except he were a skilled artificer? And when the chiefs give their guests handsome presents, they take care to state that they mean to reimburse themselves by levying contributions on their people. When Ulysses sees Penelope apparently consenting to the wishes of the suitors, and encouraging them to state their claims, though in great danger, he is delighted at her good sense in drawing plenty of handsome presents from them by these means, reflecting that he will presently get possession of them himself. Except in the heat of battle, the Homeric hero never thought of using such

* Lord Derby's *Iliad*, xxii. 557.

an expression as "thy money perish with thee." Nay, even the murder of a brother or father could be atoned for by a pecuniary fine. There is a remarkable passage, where the Lykian hero, Glaukus, meets Diomede in battle, and in the preliminary parley—for even at this period the Greek heroes were very fond of talking and boasting—discovers that their ancestors were great friends. The hero proposes an exchange of arms, to which Diomede gladly consents. Homer's remark upon this is worthy of notice:—"The gods must have taken away the sense of Glaukus, to exchange golden arms for brass."* The idea of the Lykian chief deliberately incurring a pecuniary loss to satisfy an instinct of generosity, seems never to strike him.

You see then, in the Homeric civilization, a strange but not unnatural mixture of noble and ignoble features—a decided want of principle, and an abundance of noble emotions—a shrewd utilitarian spirit, and a chivalrous sense of honor—a deficiency in honesty, and a full measure of courtly sentiment.

II. But there is a peculiarity in the history of sentiment, which you must carefully bear in mind. It does not necessarily run parallel with intellectual or social refinement. In fact, there are grounds to think that an imperfect state of society is best suited to the development of sentiment as such. The epochs in the world's history, which seem most remarkable for this peculiarity, are the heroic in Greece, and that of mediæval chivalry—epochs also remarkable for a

* Lord Derby's *Iliad*, vi. 276.

great deal of barbarism and of ferocity. But the barbarism consisted chiefly in a disregard of the feelings and rights of the lower and unprivileged classes, who were at the time so degraded, that they not only tolerated, but, even in some measure acknowledged, the lofty claim of the nobles to the right of violating law and justice. And somehow this very license towards inferiors and their humble homage, seem to create a feeling of mutual respect and delicacy among the members of such aristocracies, which develops itself in refinement of manners, and great politeness of address. They, as it were, atone for their injustice and violence to inferiors, by sentiment in the society of equals. The mistress of a chief receives respect and homage, while the head of a villain household is spurned with contempt.

When civilization progresses, and the rights of the lower classes become recognised—when the lord is compelled to obey the same law as the labourer, (if indeed he ever does so,) the decay of aristocratic exclusiveness seems to bring with it a decay of courtliness and of sentiment. It is, perhaps, natural that when all classes come into social contact, their standard of refinement cannot be so high as that of a small and exclusive nobility. The increase in the means of obtaining wealth and knowledge, the greater hurry and bustle of life, the growth of diligence and of sober thinking—all these things leave less time for the pomp of ceremony and the circumstance of etiquette; and these latter are even despised, on principle, by men of democratic and utilitarian views.

Truth, justice, and common sense, are the point of view from which men now regard actions, instead of being satisfied with mere sentiment. No doubt, this change implies a great advance in civilization. But yet the gain is not without its alloy. That the injured husband, for example, should be satisfied, not with the doubtful issue of a duel, but with the certain transfer of a round sum of money to his pocket, may indeed be a real advance in civilization, but is surely a great retrograde step in the law of sentiment and of honour.

I introduce these general reflections, as affording a suitable transition to the second part of my subject—the consideration of the Euripidean age, in which we shall discuss the development and decay of the same ideas of honour, of delicacy, and of humanity, which have already occupied us in the Homeric times.

It was the most brilliant epoch in Greek History, from an intellectual, from an artistic, from a political point of view, but inferior to ruder ages in many social characteristics. Yet let us understand clearly what we mean by the advanced civilization of the Athenians in the days of Euripides. Most of us have seen or heard of their architecture, their sculpture, and their poetry; and in these respects, we know the Athenians, in particular, to have been highly civilized; but it does not occur to us to think, that in their social arrangements and laws, they at all approached the refinement or the humanity of modern days. Our charities and hospitals—our care even of the feelings and rights of criminals—in fact, the

benevolence of our legislation ;—these are points in which most men think that even the most polished nations of antiquity were as barbarians, when compared with ourselves. Of course, all these humane feelings have obtained a great development since the influence of Christianity was brought to bear on European society. And yet, even from the remaining fragments of the literature of imperial Athens, we can show that these very feelings of humanity, properly so called, existed and had their influence in the minds of Athenian lawgivers. I feel confident, that two or three of the more delicate evidences will be amply sufficient in this place.

Surely, then, one of the most advanced features of our civilization is the extreme jealousy of the law in the case of violence done to persons. The law protects us, of course, against actual injury, but even to lay hands upon a man, to touch him discourteously in a quarrel, constitutes an assault, and is visited with heavy penalties. And the conflict here is not merely between civilization and rude barbarism, but between civilization and that chivalrous law of honour, which prompts a man to resent immediately, and in person, any insult he has received. But at last, after many centuries of improving legislation, we are agreed that personal conflicts must be absolutely prevented; and perhaps, future ages will honourably distinguish our generation and our country, as that which first thoroughly subjected the code of honour to the dictates of the law. The calm persuasions of reason have at length really conquered the fiery dictates of passion,

for a duel has become not only illegal, but ridiculous.* Well, all this development was complete in the epoch of Athenian history of which I speak. No doubt, the turbulence of the young nobles, who could not brook the political equality of the lower classes, made such precautions highly necessary; but still, the constant allusions in the orators to this great jealousy of the law, as regards the sanctity of person, show a state of civilization unintelligible to any but the most advanced peoples even of our day.

Take another boast of modern culture—a boast which Christianity has often arrogated as peculiar to itself—the care of the health of the poor in a community. We are told that the old Greeks had neither hospitals nor charities, merely because the scanty remains of the contemporary literature do not allude to them. The silence of authors upon points not within their immediate scope, is, of course, of no weight, and is in this case additionally refuted by at least one mention of an hospital,† and by the fact, that charities must have been the private concern of the Athenian clans.‡ But even were the literature of the day completely preserved to us, there might be no further mention of common daily charities, than there is in Shakespeare of hospitals. And even were our solitary evidence about hospitals lost,

* Even now the Germans and the French have not yet reached this point.

† Crates, *θήρια*, frag. 2.

‡ Disabled soldiers, indeed, had been provided for by a law of Peisistratus, at a much earlier date.

there remains evidence of an organized dispensary system, under which the ablest physicians of the day received state salaries, to heal the poor gratuitously. There was even a technical term for these public practitioners.*

But I can give you even a higher and more delicate symptom of civilization than all this. Perhaps in the whole of our present culture, the most advanced feature is our regard for the rights and the feelings of criminals. We have at last opened our eyes to the idea, that the sentence of the law should not inflict unnecessary cruelty. All accessory penalties, arising from the carelessness or the brutality of the minions of the law, are regarded, not as well deserved concomitants, but as unjust aggravations of the sentence. Even the wretch condemned to death has his rights, and is now treated with the consideration due to his awful position. But no, I have not stated the truth; our boasted modern civilization has not yet attained this noble position. For do we not still tolerate those vile public executions, when the low, the depraved, and the ignorant among us—when those who most need lessons of decency and of refinement, are invited to profane, with unhallowed gaze, the awful mystery of the dissolution of soul and body, and to interrupt, with impious oath and with ribald jest, the solemn voice of the passing-bell, or the still more solemn silence, in which the amazed sinner would fain prepare for his strange and fearful exile.†

* *δημοσίου*. See also the Schol. in Aristoph., Ach. 964.

† Shortly after I had spoken these words the newspapers announced the last *public* execution, (26th May, 1868.)

The Athenians of the age of Euripides were far too careful of the education of their lower classes, to tolerate such public encouragements of brutality and profanity. The pathetic narrative of the execution of Sokrates, shows us how gentle and civilized were the arrangements for carrying out the extreme sentence of the law. We are informed that poisoning by hemlock was adopted as the easiest and most painless death.* The criminal was allowed to have his family and friends about him, and was not insulted by the interference of prison officials. The gaoler, (for no executioner was necessary,) brought in the poison, and directed him to take it before a certain hour. He then retired, and left him to the care of his friends. Surely, the people who framed such laws were civilized in no ordinary degree.

But though highly civilized, they were a thorough democracy, and a democracy in which radical principles obtained an unusual development ; it was a small democracy, in which every man of power was trying to lead—full of jealousies and factions and wranglings. This feverish condition acted as a most powerful stimulus on the education of the Athenian people ; but it educated them intellectually, not morally—perhaps I might even say, immorally ; for while the curious spirits of the day sharpened their intellects by discussing and dissecting all the ideas and associations which had found respect and favour in a simpler age, but one thing resisted their scepticism, and remained a tangible object to their ambition—

* Xenophon, Apol. Soc. § 7.

political power; and such power in a civilized age can only be obtained by political means, by persuasion, and by intellectual influence. Eloquence, then, as a means both of attack and defence, and power as an end—these were their objects; and the great historian of the day describes with terrible severity the growing disregard of the higher, purer, simpler objects of life. Deceit and treachery were openly applauded as cleverness; honour and good faith either disappeared, or were ridiculed as stupid and old-fashioned; almost all the leading men were corrupt. The laws were indeed, as I have said, highly civilized. There was a great appreciation of physical, literary, and artistic beauty; but moral excellence, and the delicacy of manners which it alone can produce, were coldly admired, but rarely practised. The characters of most of the great men of the day strike us as wanting in amiability, and the whole temper of the literature as hard and selfish. I do not, of course, include the great father of history, Herodotus, who was educated in a very different atmosphere, or the gentle Sophokles; but Euripides, perhaps the most perfect exponent of the ideas of the day—Perikles, Thukydidēs, Alkibiades, Antiphon—all leave an unpleasant impression on the mind.

I am not able, then, to cite to you instances of delicate sensibility and of honour in this day, as I could from the old Epic poetry. Even the ideal tragedy of the day was unable to comprehend these beauties in Homer, and travestied the characters it borrowed from his pages. Helen became a common

profligate, Ulysses a low and cowardly knave, Menelaus a foolish simpleton. The Homeric heroes were above even the ideal characters of the day. I am rather compelled to show you how all the weaker elements in society were despised and neglected. Women, slaves, even the older men found little consideration from the feverish ambition which absorbed the whole energy of the Euripidean age. The civilization of that day was far wider than that of the Homeric age, in that it included all classes of society—the law now protected the poor as well as the rich ; but it was still narrow and imperfect, in that it did not embrace the elements which had no political importance, and the radical and utilitarian tone of society discarded those graceful hypocrisies, by which the weaker sex and the aged are prevented from feeling too sharply their real insignificance.

The continual complaints of the miseries of old age, common, indeed, in all periods of Greek history, but exceptionally frequent in the literature of the day, afford a painful proof of this temper in Athenian society. Nowhere did the radical spirit of their civilization show itself more distinctly than in want of respect for the hoary head. It had, indeed, been formerly in fashion to honour old age, and the Areopagus had once been regarded as the fountain of wisdom in the state. But in those feverish times men's views changed so rapidly on all the great questions of the day—upon religion, upon education, upon morals, upon philosophy—that the rising generation

found themselves separated by a century of thought from their parents. The old simple devices of politics were sneered at as transparent ; the old training which made men soldiers, and not diplomatists, was despised as uncultivated. The older men were of no service in the business of the new generation ; and when they tried to join in the favourite recreation of the day—philosophical discussion—they were equally out of place. For men would no longer listen to prosy discourses from any one. Was not Sokrates daily insisting on the necessity of rapid question and answer in all conversation? And so the old man felt himself thrust aside as an object of neglect, if not of contempt. He was useless, and as such received little consideration from the young Athens of the day. “To me,” exclaims Euripides, (and that too in a passage where he breaks away from the subject of his play to utter his own deepest convictions) “to me youth is sweet, but old age weighs upon the mind with a load greater than the cliffs of Ætna, and veils the eyes with a gloomy shroud. Give me not the riches of Asiatic royalty, nor mine house full of gold, in exchange for youth, which is dearest of all in wealth, dearest of all in poverty. But bitter and envious old age I hate, would it had never come to the abodes and dwellings of men.”* And to the same effect we can quote even the amiable and popular Sophokles, whose sons were so impatient of his prolonged years, that they essayed to wrest from him his property, by proving him imbecile. In his

* Euripides. *Herc. Fur.* 638 sqq.

last great work, the Lear of ancient tragedy, where the poet reflects upon the miseries of the old and outcast king, he enumerates, indeed, all the ills of every age, and complains that it were better not to be ; but, as the climax to the sorrows of human life, he reproaches old age—"feeble, unsociable, friendless, the perpetual object of reproach, when all the woes of woes are the partners of our habitation."* No doubt, as on the part of youth respect for age was rare, so among the old that gentleness of temper, which is the result of an acknowledged position and of reverence for others must also have been rare; and we are quite prepared for the melancholy but pointed utterance of a later poet—"Age is like wine; leave but a little over in your vessel, and it turns to vinegar."†

But still sadder than the condition of the aged was that of women at this remarkable period. The days of the noble and high principled Penelope, of the refined and intellectual Helen, of the innocent and spirited Nausikaa, of the gentle and patient Andromache, had passed away. Men no longer sought and respected the society of the gentler sex. Would that Euripides had even been familiar, as Homer was, with the sound of women brawling in the streets! For in these days they were confined to Asiatic silence and seclusion, while the whole life of the men, both in business and recreation, was essentially public. Just as the feverish excitement

* *Œdipus Col.* 1220, sqq.

† *Antiphanes, frag. incert.* 68.

of political life now-a-days prompts men to spend even their leisure in the clubs, where they meet companions of like passions and interests with themselves, so the Athenian gentleman only came home to eat and to sleep; his leisure as well as his business kept him in the market-place. His wife and daughters, ignorant of philosophy and politics, were strangers to his real life, and took no interest in his pursuits.

The results were fatal to Athenian society. The women, uninstructed, neglected, and enslaved, soon punished their oppressors with their own keen and bitter weapons, and with none keener than their vices. For of course all the delicacy and grace of female character disappeared. Intellectual power in women was distinctly associated with moral depravity, so that excessive ignorance and stupidity was considered the only guarantee of virtue.* The qualifications for society became incompatible with the qualifications for home duties, so that the outcasts from society, as we call them, were not the immoral and the profligate, but the honourable and the virtuous. Accordingly, when we consult the literature of the day, we find women treated either with contemptuous ridicule in comedy, or with still more contemptuous silence in history.† In tragedy or in

* Eurip. Hippol. 640.

† The silence of Thukydides on women in general, and on Aspasia in particular, appears intentional, and carries out the concluding sentiment in the great speech he attributes to Perikles.

the social theories of the philosophers alone can we hope for a glimpse into the average character and position of Athenian women.

Here, at least, we might have expected that the portraits drawn with such consummate skill by Homer would have been easily transferred to the Athenian stage. But to our astonishment we find the higher social feelings towards women so weak, that the Athenian tragic poets seem quite unable to appreciate or even to understand the more delicate features in Homer's characters. They are painted so coarsely and ignorantly by Euripides that we should never recognize them, but for their names. Base motives and unseemly wrangling take the place of chivalrous honour and graceful politeness.

But the critics of the day complained that Euripides degraded the ideal character of tragedy by painting human nature as he found it; in fact, as it was, and not as it ought to be. Let us turn, then, to Sophokles, who painted the most ideal women which the imagination of a refined Athenian could conceive, and consider his most celebrated characters—his Antigone and his Elektra. A calm, dispassionate survey will, I think, pronounce them harsh and masculine. They act rightly, no doubt, and even nobly, but they do it in the most disagreeable way. Except in their external circumstances, they differ in no respect from men; so that there is peculiar significance in the fact, that these female parts were acted on the Athenian stage by men. Elektra, for instance, is ostentatious of her poverty, fond of wrangling,

unmoved at the sight of blood ; she shows no trace of remaining affection towards the enemies in her household, though her nearest relatives, and is unjust towards those who sympathise with her, without being bold enough to assist her. Even in the celebrated *Antigone* there are the same features ; for the two heroines do not differ in any delicate peculiarities, as they would have done in Homer or in Shakspeare. *Antigone* acts rightly and nobly ; but she is contumacious, and wrangles in a most unfeminine way with her adversaries. The bitter but idle self-reproaches of the refined Helen—the grand, but purely passive, and therefore purely feminine, courage of Penelope—the gentle submissiveness of *Andromache*—these things seem unknown, or unnatural, to the Athenian dramatist ; for the diseased state of society had robbed him of the most precious models of his art. How cold and poor is Sophokles' treatment of the affecting relations between *Hæmon* and *Antigone*. A great poet at any other age would have made the parting of the lovers one of the chief points of tragic interest ; but such a scene would have shocked the delicacy of the Athenians, for though young girls might occasionally be seen at a procession or other religious ceremony,* they were

* Religious ceremonies and processions were accordingly the common resort of young men, and indeed of girls, as we can see in *Theokritus*, for more than religion's sake. It is well known, that among strict evangelical people in the present day, when the daughters of the house are forbidden balls, concerts, and other lawful amusements, matrimonial affairs are settled on the way to and from church, and at religious meetings. The parallel is very curious.

never allowed to form a male acquaintance till after marriage, and even then, to touch the hand of a lady was considered a gross breach of propriety in an Athenian gentleman.

I am sorry that time forbids me from discussing the secondary and inferior female characters of Sophokles, which alone appear to me to have any special and interesting individuality; and in Euripides women are powerful only in one point—in passion.

But even that most adverse critic allows that they are unfairly treated, and that their perpetual complaints were the natural consequence of their degraded position. This very just view of the defects of Athenian society was also enforced by the great Sokrates, who is represented by Xenophon* as arguing with a friend concerning the supposed uselessness of the sex. "Whether," says the friend, "are we to blame the husband or the wife for such a result?" "If a sheep," answered Sokrates, "turn out badly, we generally blame the shepherd, or if a horse, the trainer; and in the case of a woman, should she turn out badly after being well instructed by her husband, doubtless she should bear the blame; but if he omit to instruct her in what is right and proper, and then finds her ignorant, should not he himself bear it? But come," he adds, "as we are all friends, answer me fairly, is there any one to whom you intrust such important concerns as to your wife? To no one. *Is there any one with whom you have*

* Œconomicus, cap. iii. sqq.

less social intercourse than your wife? Hardly any one, to say the least. But did you not marry her very young, a mere child, *who had seen and heard as little as she possibly could?* Certainly. Then would it not be far stranger if she knew what she should say and do than if she did not?" And then he goes on to give an account of a conversation he had with a model husband, the master of a model household, which was the envy of his neighbours.* "Did you instruct your wife yourself?" Sokrates had asked, "or did you receive her from her parents prepared in her duties?" "What, Sokrates," was the answer, "could I have found her to know, seeing that she came to me not fifteen years old, and having lived under strict supervision, in order that she might see and hear and inquire as little as possible? For surely you do not think it sufficient for her to be able to turn a certain quantity of wool into a garment. In matters of cookery, indeed, O Sokrates, she came very well instructed—a thing which seems to me a most important part of the education both of men and women." And then the model man goes on to describe at length how he educated his poor little wife. As soon as she had become *tame and docile*, so that it was *possible to enter into conversation with her*, (it is the expression used by the Greeks for domesticating a savage or wild animal,)[†] he asks her

* *Œconomicus*, cap. vii.

† *ἵπαι ἤδη μοι χειροῦθης ἦν καὶ ἰπειθήσασσιντο ὥστε διαλίγασθαι*, are the words. *εἰθισμένον διδοικὸς καὶ σποτινὸν ζῆν*, is the parallel expression of Plato as to female life in Athens. *Legg.* vi. p. 781, D.

does she understand the objects and the end of her new life, and how she may assist him? "How could I assist you?" said she, "and what ability have I? Everything lies in your hands; but my mother said that my duty was to be chaste and modest." Then he proceeds to expound to her—nobly enough, too—the common interests and duties of man and wife, and unfolds to her all that she can do in the household to assist him. He tells how he gradually dissuaded her from using *rouge* and high-heeled boots,* and taught her order and punctuality. But of any intellectual intercourse, of any refined recreation or employment for the model wife, there is nothing. Even as to the education of children, the great Sokrates is known to have advised a friend to send his son from beneath his mother's care to be instructed by Aspasia,† a lady of brilliant intellect indeed, but of a moral character so disreputable as must have excluded her from any modern society.

It would be hard, indeed, for tragedians to draw pure and noble ideals of women in such a state of society, and it was very easy for the comic poets and the sarcastic wits of the day to complain that they could not find what they had themselves destroyed. It has been often said that slavery was the great blot in Athenian civilization. I think the degradation of

* False hair, in the shape of artificial ringlets inserted among natural ones, is mentioned by Diphilus, *Σκελαιός*. Menander objects to the practice of dying hair yellow.

† Cf. Meineke, *Hist. Com. Græc.* p. 134.

women was a far deeper and more disastrous evil.* While the noblest art, the most stirring eloquence, the most divine philosophy, became the daily portion of the men of Athens, their wives, their mothers, and their sisters were not only excluded from these privileges, but treated with suspicion and contempt, and condemned to a life of mean drudgery and of hopeless insignificance. And yet I doubt whether the present age should be the first to cast a stone at the men of Athens. We do not, indeed, rudely keep our women under lock and key—we admit them to our society and to intercourse with the world; but is there not still abroad a spirit of jealousy towards their higher education—is there not still a strong social disfavour towards their seeking to gain intellectual pre-eminence? Still worse, are they not encouraged to adorn and to display the meanest of their perfections, and even urged by society to spend their time in frivolities and in trifles? Surely, when all these things come to be judged by the standard of a higher civilization, the age which compelled women to live in servitude and in ignorance will be judged only one degree inferior to that which induced them to live in idleness and in dissipation.

III. There remains yet another chapter of social life among the Greeks.† We turn to an age, when we

* There is a remarkable anticipation of the most advanced modern views on female education in the 5th book of Plato's Republic; of which there is an excellent analysis in Grote's Plato, iii. p. 199, seq.

† A very elegant and learned sketch of this epoch will be found in M. G. Guizot's "Menandre et la Société Grecque," &c.

find them beneath the sway of the Macedonian conquerors; when the petty wars and the narrow politics of little republics sank into insignificance before the colossal duel of the East and the West; when all Greece combined was of small moment in the shock of empires. It was for nought that they had sacrificed their home-affections, their honour, their personal comforts, to a long strife for pre-eminence in their tiny peninsula: their real and permanent conquests were to be made on a far greater arena and in a widely different sphere from what they had expected. And now the tone of social life and feeling is changed at Athens. When conflicts were raging for the possession of Syria and Asia, of India and Egypt, the day for subtle diplomacy was gone; the soldier could no longer be a citizen, but a rude mercenary, whose profession was war, and who only appeared in polite society as a vain braggart and an ignorant coxcomb. Nor had he lost the old Greek defects of doubtful courage and questionable honesty. In the witty comedy of the day, the usual butt for sarcasm is the man of valour in his own estimation, just returned with his spoils from great conquests in Asia, who thinks he can win the devotion of the graceful Attic damsels as easily as he can buy the flattery which trumpets forth his deeds in arms. "No soldier could be a gentleman," exclaims Menander; "not even were the Deity to endeavour to make him one."* The citizen proper, on the contrary, is a man of elegance and refinement, gentle in his manners,

* Menander, frag. incert. 192.

and considerate to his neighbours. He is, indeed, a hopeless sceptic : he has, long since, surrendered his faith in the politics and in the destinies of his country ; he treats with contempt the immortal gods and their supposed providence ; he sneers at the aspirations of the philosophers to explain the mysteries of the universe ; he ridicules or laments, at least in theory, the wisdom and happiness of every sphere of life ; but in practice he has learned that selfish and violent passions rend and distort the mind, and ruin even the small amount of comfort which is granted us by chance or destiny in this miserable world. Our only reasonable object is to promote our happiness, and this is, after all, best done by promoting the happiness of those around us. Consequently the comforts of home and family, which the feverish political activity of a former age had neglected and injured, become the first object of consideration. And so the great comic poet, Menander, and his friend, the great philosopher, Epicurus—in fact, the great practical teachers of the day, deserted politics and metaphysics, and made private life the object of their study and their precepts.

From the picture they have left us, we perceive that the nation had, as it were, grown old. The meekness, the gentleness, the sadness of old age and chequered experience, are there ;* but the quick

* Perhaps the love of country life, so evident in the fragments of Menander, was a consequence of this change. In the age of Perikles and Sokrates the cultivated Athenians utterly despised such a life. This must have been an important auxiliary cause

sense of honour and the keen love of liberty found in a former age are gone. "The gods," said Homer, "deprived a man of half his virtue in the day of slavery."* "How much better is it," retorts Menander, almost in the words of the prodigal son, who had wasted his substance and his hopes, "to be under a good master, than to live in poverty and free."† And to the same poet is due the origin of the celebrated apophthegm, "He that fights and runs away, will live to fight another day."‡ But with the loss of the spirit of liberty and of honour there was, as I have said, a great gain in temper and in manners. The Menandrian Greek despised that habit of bitter wrangling which had so greatly marred the beauty of Attic tragedy, and had even lowered the dignity of the Homeric heroes. As in the days of Euripides no gentleman would think of passing over an insult without an angry retort, so in these gentler days the very opposite practice is commended. "Nothing is pleasanter," says one of the comic poets, "and more refined than to be able to bear abuse in silence; for the man who abuses is abused by his own abuse, if

in the degradation of women during that age; for a lady can hardly share in the *city* business and recreation of men, while she can have no more important post than the control of a *country* household. It is, then, very natural, and, I think, affecting, to read in the panegyrics on country life put by Xenophon (very inconsistently) into Sokrates' mouth, that the prospect of moving out to the country was "delightful to the wife, and longed for by the children." (Econom. v. § 10.)

* Odyssey, xvii. 322. † Menander, frag. incert. 179.

‡ Menander, *γῆμομαί*, 45.

the man whom he has abused will not appropriate it to himself.* “The best man,” says Menander, “is he who best knows how to control himself when he is injured, for a hot and bitter temper is a patent proof to everybody of littleness of mind.”

With this improved temper there came in naturally a greater consideration for the feelings of others, and a greater indulgence in general for the faults and foibles of mankind. The legislators of the age of Euripides had been humane and gentle in advance of the society of their day; now public opinion had progressed, and humanity was to be found not merely in the dictates of the law, but in the maxims and in the practice of ordinary life. I said that the age of Euripides was superior to that of Homer, in that men considered not only their equals in rank and station—that the poor had their rights and their dignity. The age of Menander advanced a step further, and embraced within its sympathies not merely the humbler citizen, but the woman and the slave, the poor and the destitute—all, in fact, who in the reign of politics had been forgotten and despised. The duties of masters towards their slaves, the obligations of slaves towards benevolent masters, are a common subject of discourse. “For even a slave,” says Philemon, “is our flesh and blood; no one was ever born a slave by nature; fortune has but enslaved his body;” and as to the poor, not only are there many beautiful passages commiserating their sad lot, but there are distinct precepts enjoining charity upon

* Philemon. *Ἐπίδομος*, frag. I.

the rich, not merely as a duty, but even as a privilege. The relations of the rich and the poor are a distinct feature in the literature of the day, and at no time did the value of a faithful servant find more constant recognition. Even the continual complaints of the idleness and knavery of slaves are but a proof that higher qualities were expected from them; and this remark applies to all the apparent bitterness and the discontent in the comedy of the day. For the greatest punishment which the comic poet can inflict on ignorance, bad temper, and injustice, is shame, ridicule, and self-reproach. And Menander naturally introduces his disappointed characters venting their spleen in those generalized reflections on human vice and misery, by which such characters endeavour to acquit themselves of folly and of blame.

Constant, for example, are the attacks upon marriage and the responsibilities of a family. Such remarks are, indeed, common in the satire and comedy of every time, even of our own; which, I suppose, estimates the institution of marriage more highly than ever. "The man is actually married," says a witty fragment of the poet Antiphanes.* "My goodness, do you say so; is it the man whom I left alive and walking about?" "Great Jupiter," says another poet, with subtler irony, "may I perish if I ever spoke against women, the most precious of all acquisitions. For if Medea was an objectionable person, surely Penelope was an excellent creature. Does any one abuse Klytemnestra? I oppose the admirable Alkestis. But, perhaps,

* Antiphanes, φιλοκάρων.

some one may abuse Phædra ; but, by Jove, what a capital person was — Oh ! dear, the catalogue of good women is already exhausted, but there is still a crowd of bad ones that might be mentioned.”

Marriages with heiresses, too, are particularly criticized as foolish and unhappy ; for even in those days, as now, a fortune and a high connection was often preferred to the more important qualifications of a wife. “Whosoever desires to marry an heiress, is either suffering under the wrath of the gods, or wishes to be called lucky, while he is really miserable.”* But in spite of all these complaints, almost every play of Menander ended with the happy marriage, not, indeed, of an heiress, who made herself disagreeable, and wasted her husband’s fortune, but of some loving, simple, penniless girl, whose adventures had excited during the play the deep sympathy of the audience. So that marriage was really looked upon as a happy and natural termination of the gay life of youth, and in many beautiful fragments not only the dangers and responsibilities of educating a family, but the blessings of a home and children, are distinctly acknowledged. Yet by the same law of comedy which I have mentioned, the harsh and unreasonable parent is introduced, deceived by his children and his slaves, destroying his own comfort, and injuring the honesty of his household by his tyranny.

But as Menander’s comedies were devoted to portraying private life, he did not disdain to criticize even trifling matters of etiquette, of politeness, and

* Menander.

of fashion. Take, for example, the management of dinner parties—a subject which gave him hardly less scope for satire than it would at present. First come the difficulties of preparing the entertainment. Fish being the greatest delicacy at Athens, we find bitter complaints of the dreadful extortion and the absurd impudence of the fish-mongers. In the middle comedy, indeed, the attacks on fish-mongers form quite a peculiar feature, and, along with money-changers, they seem the greatest objects of public odium. Next come the troubles about cooks. In the previous generation those important functionaries had been free men, who were engaged, along with their cooking apparatus, for the occasion.* Now, owing probably to the increase of luxury, the cooks are slaves in the household. But their pretensions seem in no way diminished. They rivalled their modern representatives in inventing absurd and unintelligible names for their dishes, not indeed under the pretence of using a foreign language, but of adapting the majestic phraseology of the Homeric poems to their purposes.† Even in ordinary conversation, they would not condescend to the graceful dialect of Attica, but spoke in a Doric *patois*, because the art of cooking was supposed to have been perfected in Doric Sicily. In this they made common cause with the physicians, who found it expedient to prescribe in Doric Greek, as their

* Antiphanes, *Μίτριχος*. Alexis, *Φυγάς*.

† Cf. Strato, *Φοινικίδης*, a very humorous fragment, beginning—“It is a male sphinx, and not a cook, that I have got into the house.”

patients would feel no respect for their treatment, if they used the purer and more literary language of Athens.* This, too, has its parallel in the present day. And then these cooks spoke of their art as if it were the highest science in the world.

With regard to the entertainments themselves, many curious remarks are preserved to us. It was considered vulgar to have a large and expensive dinner party at a wedding. We find also the elegant stinginess of the Athenian banquets contrasted with the homely but more hospitable entertainments of other cities.† In fact, the great requisites at an Athenian dinner party seem to have been elegant appointments and pleasant conversation; and from this latter point of view, family parties are ridiculed as intolerably stupid. I suppose there are few of you who have not on some occasion been thrust by adverse fate into a company, where you found yourself interposing as a cold obstruction between affectionate relations, who are keeping up a perpetual cross fire of questions as to the health of Dick, and the prospects of dear Harry, and whether cousin Dinah has recovered from her influenza; whether Mary's children had really the whooping cough, and whether Jane was actually going to marry Tommy. Similar misfortunes seem to have befallen Menander. "It is a dreadful thing," exclaims one of his characters, "to fall among relations at a dinner party, where the father, keeping

* Crates, frag. incert. 5, Alexis, *Μανδραγοριζομένη*, frag. 2. Epicrates, frag. incert. 1.

† Lynceus, *Κίνταυρος*.

his hand on the bottle, spins a long yarn, and makes no joke without an explanation ; and then the mother begins ; and then an old grandmother puts in her talk ; and then another old fellow, with a husky voice, the grandmother's father, begins ; and then another old lady, who calls him her darling pet. But the poor guest has to sit, and try to look intelligent all the while."*

These details, which could be greatly multiplied, did time permit, may seem trifling, but are quoted to show the delicacy of social feeling among the Greeks of this period. The refinement and graces of what we call society begin to occupy men's chief attention.† Those lesser actions and sentiments, which we describe under the general title of good breeding, and which cannot be explained but by examples, assume a place more important than morals, and more interesting than politics or public affairs. There can be no doubt that Menander, were he raised from the dead, and introduced into the best modern society, would rapidly adapt himself to his altered circumstances, and take his place as a refined and elegant gentleman.

And yet all these gracious manners, all this bene-

* Menander, frag. incert. 17.

† Here is a fragment of Apollodorus—"When you go to visit a friend at his house, you can perceive his friendliness the moment you enter the door, for first the servant who opens the door looks pleased, then the dog wags its tail and comes up to you, and the first person you meet hands you a chair, before any one has said a word."

volent temper, all this consideration for the poor and the afflicted, are the result of a philosophy, not of hope, but of despair. For though, even in the previous generation, men still believed in the pursuit of pleasure, and said with the Preacher, that "there is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labour," though they then still essayed to dispel the increasing gloom by the glare of revelry and the noise of riot; yet now the faith, even in that miserable substitute, was gone. They said of laughter, it is mad, and of mirth, what doeth it? They had seen all the works that were done under the sun; all was vanity and vexation of spirit; and their highest hope is to escape from life as soon and as quietly as they can. "Old age," they exclaim, "ends in no pleasant death. Those whom the gods love die young." "Were the gods to come and say to me: When thou diest, thou must again return to life; be what thou wilt—a dog, a sheep, a goat, a horse, a man, for once more must thou live; 'tis fated, now therefore choose thee what thou wilt. Forthwith I think that I should answer them; anything you will, except a man, for he alone is unjustly allotted his pleasure and his pain. The better horse is more cared for than the worse; if a hound be good, he has more honour than the worthless cur; a noble cock is better fed, and lives to terrify his worthless fellow. But let a man be good, well-born and noble, it serves him nothing in the present day. The flatterer fares best of all; next comes the sycophant, and then the villain. Better

were it to become an ass than to behold the wicked your superiors in the world.”*

But the notion of another existence makes a very small figure in the practical philosophy of the age, and is generally regarded as an idle and imaginary hypothesis. This is the real cause of the melancholy in even the lighter literature of the day. For while men's views of life were sad and hopeless, the presence of death seems to suggest to them nothing but oblivion and decay. “Wilt thou know what thou art, look upon the monuments of the dead, as thou journeyest by the way. In them there are bones and idle dust of men that were kings, and tyrants, and the wise, and who esteemed themselves for birth and fortune, for their glory and the beauty of their persons. But of all these things none did save them from the hand of time, for here all mortals have a common fate. Look upon these, and know thyself what thou art.” † There is here no hope of a future world; no expectation of a higher existence. To the Greeks, indeed, of an earlier generation, the strong instinct of immortality had whispered, as it does to us, with its magic tones. The disappointed Euripides had darkly felt it, and had longed bitterly for annihilation, while the loftier Plato had caught its music clearly with his finer sense. But the false religions and the faded prospects of the race had jarred in discord with its subtle chords, and drowned the voice of its higher inspiration. To us, indeed, when blighted with sorrow and disappointment, when the

* Menander.

† Menander, frag. incert. 9.

world is passing away as a vapour, to us too it is possible to look upon earthly things with the indifference and the scorn that embittered the reflections of the gentle Menander; but to us again that strange instinct whispers immortality, and the oracles of *our* faith do but increase the harmony, when they declare the promises of a future glory. Far different, therefore, are the words of the Christian poet, even though he utters almost the same lament :—

“Even soe is Time who takes on trust
 Our youth, our joys, and all we have,
 And pays us back with age and dust,
 And in the cold and silent grave,
 When we have wandered all our wayes,
 Makes up the story of our dayes.
 But from this grave, this age, this dust,
 My God will raise me up, I trust.”

POSTSCRIPT.

THE narrow limits of time within which a lecturer is obliged to treat so large a subject, compelled me to omit altogether the social aspect of Greek education, perhaps the most interesting and important part of their civilization; and the nature of the audience made it inconvenient to discuss the social refinement which did exist among ladies at Athens. Much as I regret these omissions, it was preferable to pass them over in perfect silence than to waste time in apologies.

Lest the text should be encumbered with foot-notes, there are only added sufficient references to show that the original authorities have been throughout consulted, and that no unwarranted inferences have been drawn from them.

THE
POETRY OF SIR WALTER SCOTT.

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THE
POETRY OF SIR WALTER SCOTT.

A LECTURER who should take as his subject the poetry of Milton or of Shakspeare, or, to come to our own times, the poetry of Wordsworth or of Tennyson, would be sure to command, in one point at least, the sympathy of his audience. Faults in the execution of his task there might be. He might have mis-read the genius of his author. Real beauties might have passed with him unnoticed. He might be accused of claiming admiration for that which was in truth a blemish—his lecture might be in every respect a failure; but certainly no exception would be taken to its title. However universally and justly he might be condemned for misinterpreting the writings upon which he undertook to comment, no one would say that he did wrong in calling them *poetry*.

But the lecturer who takes as his subject the poetry of Sir Walter Scott may, not impossibly, elicit from some critics a remark of this kind—“*Poetry* of Walter Scott. What is that?—*verses*, I suppose, you mean.”

That such a spirit is general, I am far from saying. Still we can hardly pronounce beyond the reach of

controversy the question—Was Walter Scott, in the true sense of the word, a poet—or do we degrade that great name in applying it to him? Must we at least extend that class with great liberality before we can make it wide enough to take him in? Shall we say that his metrical romances burn with the fire of true poetry, or do we read them “only for the story;” and might they without much injury be translated into prose?

It would be unjust, even if it were possible, to examine the writings of Walter Scott as if they appeared now for the first time. That which may be called the external history of a book—its success or its failure—the practical verdict which the public have pronounced upon it, is not, indeed, absolutely decisive of its merit. Yet that is but a presumptuous criticism which refuses to allow weight to such a verdict when it *is* clearly pronounced. Of course it is easy to sneer at “the famed throng,” and to mourn over “neglected genius;” and such satires or elegies will always be popular with the (pretty numerous) class who are *not* famous, and whose genius a perverse public could never be made to appreciate. And no doubt the history of literature does contain instances, in which the satire or the elegy may be quite just. But I think that they are exceptional instances. Genius, if it do not wilfully hide itself, is not often neglected; and though the public does occasionally make to itself an image of clay, such worship is usually very short-lived. The iconoclast is not far distant, and the idol of yesterday is swept

into the dust-heap to-day, all the more remorselessly because it *was* an idol.

But when the worship has not been short-lived—when the verdict of the public has been repeated over and over again—when edition after edition has failed to satiate the demand ; and when all this process has been going on for more than half a century, it would be somewhat bold to deny the merits of an author who can call such an array of witnesses. The evidence borne by such success is not, perhaps, decisive, but it is certainly very strong.

And what author could cite such evidence with more confidence than Walter Scott—what author could more truly say, that if public approval be the mint stamp, his poems have been long since recognized as genuine gold. For what are the facts? The number of complete editions of Scott's poetical works is more than twenty-five—that of some of the separate poems is even more. The first of his poetical romances, "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," has passed through at least thirty editions. It is said that within five years no less than thirty thousand copies were sold. Nor is the variety of these editions less remarkable than their number. Here are two. The first is the well-known Edinburgh edition of 1856, in the highest style of typography, illustrated by the genius of Turner and other eminent artists—a costly and beautiful volume. And here, at the other end of the bibliographic scale, is an edition of the "Lady of the Lake," published, not in Edinburgh, where national partiality might be expected to ensure its success, but

in the good city of Dublin, at the moderate price of one penny. I hardly know which has paid the greater tribute to the genius of the author—Messrs. Black, who thought no expense too great for such a work, or Mr. Duffy, who expects, and I sincerely hope will find, that the popularity of the author whose works he thus places within the reach of his poorest fellow-citizen, will sufficiently multiply the very small fraction of a penny which the sale of each copy can yield him.

Doubtless there are critics with whom this evidence would weigh lightly enough. In music, in painting, in poetry, there are those who would restrict the right of judging to a few of the initiated ; the rest of the public being expected to applaud or censure, in implicit obedience to their artistic superiors—a flock of sheep, whose simple duty is to jump over (or into) the ditches, as the critical bell-wether may choose to lead them. But this measure of wholesale disfranchisement results from the confounding of two questions which are in reality distinct. *Whether* a certain work of art deserve praise or blame, that is one question—a question upon which, I humbly submit, a large number of men are qualified (not equally, of course, but still qualified) to give an opinion. *Why* the work deserves praise or blame, that is quite another question—a question upon which comparatively few men are qualified to give an opinion. And if you, a critic, choose to commence an artistic conversation with any one of that large uninitiated class whom you wish to disfranchise, or, perhaps, I should

rather say, to drive *en masse* to the poll, I have no doubt that in five minutes you will prove to the company, and perhaps to himself, that he knows nothing at all about the matter. When he ventures to praise a painting or a poem, and you tell him "that the handling is deficient in firmness," or that "there is a want of breadth in the rendering," he has not the faintest conception what you mean; and you have but to close the conversation with an expressive shrug to cover him with confusion. But, let me tell you, you do him a grievous injustice, if you think that artistic genius speaks to him in an unknown tongue, because he cannot comprehend your critical jargon; or because he cannot give a lecture upon the subject; or even because he is in that frame of mind which Sterne thought so adorable—"giving up the reins of his imagination into his author's hands, being pleased he knows not why, and cares not wherefore."

And you do a worse injustice—you do an injustice to art. For art would not be the great and glorious thing she is, if her utterances were intelligible only to a select few. It is because she speaks a language which *all* can in some degree understand; because the painter or the poet who seeks them aright, can find in the hearts of *all*—the king—the peasant—aye, the savage—chords which thrill to his touch—it is this which, among the powers that sway the human mind, has secured for art the high rank which we are all agreed to assign to it. Let me add; if a time should ever come (and perhaps the danger is not wholly

imaginary,) when we shall refuse to recognize the universality of that language; if our criticism should deny the glorious name of Art to all that can touch the peasant or the child—if we lay down the rule that true poetry can be appreciated only by the scholar or the genius—then we shall be doing what in us lies, not to exalt art by this aristocratic exclusiveness, but to degrade it from the throne of a universal monarch, to the presidency of a limited, though of course a highly distinguished, coterie.

If such a time do come, there is one verdict which we shall certainly have to reverse. Let me ask of any one who thinks that poetry, if of a high order, should be what is vulgarly called "hard reading," what and whence are the two poems to which men have generally assigned the highest place? From what kind of audience did they receive their earliest appreciation? Was the perception of those poetic beauties, which we have all agreed to recognise, only to be attained by profound study, or by a subtle metaphysical analysis? Were those excellencies at least wholly imperceptible to the multitude, till certain refined and exalted critics had, in their infinite condescension, pointed them out. I need not tell you that it was no such thing. You must seek the origin of the Homeric poems in a popular, national, minstrelsy; and they elicited their earliest applause, not from a court of subtle metaphysical critics, but from a somewhat promiscuous assembly of revellers, whom the nineteenth century would probably consider to be little better than savages.

Yet, no critic dares to reverse their sentence. It may, indeed, be said that they admired and applauded without well knowing why. That, I think, is very probable—nay, it involves the very distinction which I am anxious to draw. The approval, which the uneducated man bestows, is valuable, because it comes from his heart, not from his head. The tribute which a rude multitude paid to the genius of the ancient bard—a tribute, which legions of succeeding critics have vied with each other in justifying, deserves our highest respect, just because it was *not* criticism—because it found expression, not in metaphysical analysis, but in the starting tear—in the kindling eye—in the burst of irrepressible enthusiasm. “They could not tell why they applauded.” No, indeed, they could not; but each man in that multitude could feel that the minstrel had touched his heart; and in the thrill which was awakened there, he could feel, too, that that minstrel was a poet.

And therefore, when we sit in judgment upon the poetry of Walter Scott, we have no right to forget the practical verdict which has been pronounced already. Still less have we a right to discredit that verdict, because a very large proportion of the jurors know little of the principles of criticism. If those poems have found their way to the humblest class—if the simple lovers of nature have, in imagination, revelled in the glories of Loch Katrine—if boys have pored with rapture over the battle-scene in “*Marmion*,” their judgment is scarce less valuable, because “they admire without knowing why.”

If the subject of my lecture to-day were a matter of strict science—if it were my duty to criticize (doubtless to your intense gratification) some treatise upon Electricity or the Differential Calculus, I should probably commence with certain strict definitions and principles, and then inquire how far the work under consideration was constructed in harmony with them. But when we travel outside the domain of exact science, this method would be very unsatisfactory. If I were to commence by laying down a definition of poetry, and then to proceed, by incontestable syllogisms, to prove that Walter Scott was a poet, the process would not be very agreeable to you, and would almost certainly fail to carry conviction with it. Art has, indeed, her truths, no less than science; and whether “Marmion” or the “Lady of the Lake” be or be not genuine poetry, is, in one sense, a question of truth. But it is not a truth which you can force upon men’s minds in the dry, hard, merciless way in which you do force upon them a truth of Mechanics or Geometry. If here, as elsewhere, “Truth comes as a conqueror,” she does not come as a military conqueror, arrayed in a coat of mail—stern, unyielding, asking no sympathy, giving no quarter, bearing down all opposition by the force of a remorseless logic. Scientific truth cares little whether you receive her as a friend or an enemy. Confident in her own strength, she knows that in the end she must be victorious; she cares not to attract—she will not stoop to conciliate.

But though you may compel a man to believe a

theorem, you cannot compel him to admire a poem ; and therefore, the method which is applicable to the researches of science becomes quite *inapplicable* here. Without, however, affecting rigid scientific accuracy, we may fairly ask—What are the features, some of which we expect to find in all true poetry? What are the powers which distinguish the poet from the ordinary man? And which of these features and powers appear in the poetry of Walter Scott?

One of the principal of these—the principal power which is to be found in the poetry we are considering is, certainly, *word-painting*—the power of describing an object, a scene, or an event, so as to bring a picture before the mind's eye of the reader. Of the reality and distinctiveness of this power we are all conscious. We all feel that there are some descriptions which, as we read them, bring the object before us with almost the vividness of life ; while others, though perfectly faithful, and for purposes of information, equal or superior to the first, wholly fail to present to the mind any image of the thing described. Whence comes this—what account can we give of the power which the poet has, and the statistician has not, to place us in the presence of the objects which they respectively describe.

The answer to this question sounds somewhat paradoxical. The power of the poet is largely due to the incompleteness of his description. Were he to describe completely, and therefore minutely, the smallest object or event, the description might be an admirable piece of statistics, but would wholly fail as

a picture. Whatever truth there may be in the Pre-Raphaelite theory of painting, a Pre-Raphaelite poem would be an impossibility. For it must be remembered that the poet cannot, like the painter, bring every part of his picture before the mind together. He must, of necessity, bring the several parts of his group before the mind *successively*, and the process by which all these parts are combined into a single picture must be always performed, more or less largely, by the imagination of the reader. The difficulty of the task which is thus left to the reader increases of course very rapidly with the complexity of the picture; and if that be very great, the task becomes impossible, and the description ceases to be a picture at all. If the same necessity were imposed upon the most determined Pre-Raphaelite—if he were obliged to present to the eye every flower, and leaf, and blade of grass, not at once but successively—I think that even he would find that his theory required modification. It seems, then, to be an unquestionable canon in poetical composition, that the elements of which each group in a poetical picture consists, must not be numerous. I shall have occasion to show that our poet is sometimes tempted to violate this canon.

But this restriction imposes upon the poet a new difficulty—the difficulty of selection. Even with the painter, this difficulty exists. To transfer to canvas all the lines and colours of nature is, as has been said by an eminent critic, impossible. If, then, of every hundred lines which exist in nature, your pic-

ture will hold but one, how must the success of the picture depend upon the choice of that one ?

And this difficulty presses with tenfold force upon the poet. The number of elements of which *his* picture consists is small, not only as compared with nature, but as compared with the number which may exist in a painting; and therefore, while we can tolerate upon canvas many ill-chosen lines or colours, the presence of a few such elements would utterly mar the effect of word-painting. The small number of elements of which the poet can make use, must be so chosen, that the mind can quickly and without any great effort group them into a picture; all superfluous figures—everything which cannot be so grouped—must be rigorously excluded. The difference between word-painting and ordinary prosaic description appears to consist largely in this; that in the latter, the figures which are introduced are incapable of being so grouped, and therefore, how truthful soever the description be, no picture is present to the imagination of the reader.

You will better understand this distinction if I first tell you a story in prose, and then read it to you as it is told by Walter Scott. Here is the prose :—

“ MY LORD,

“ I have the honor to inform your lordship, that the disembarkation of the regiments forming the expeditionary force was effected this day between the hours of 10 a. m. and 2 35 p. m. Having communicated at an early hour this morning with Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas Brown, K. C. B., commanding the convoy, and having received a favourable answer, I directed that the men should be paraded at 9 a. m. in heavy marching

order. Two days' rations having been served out to each man, the several regiments took their places with much regularity in the launches appointed to receive them, which then pulled towards the landing-place. By the admirable arrangements of Assistant Quarter-Master-General Lieutenant Smithers, the baggage belonging to each regiment followed immediately behind the regiment itself, so that there might be no difficulty, should it be found necessary to bivouac for the night. The men were thus enabled to fall in at once upon landing, which greatly facilitated my further operations. On the whole, the disembarkation was successfully effected.

" I have the honor to be
&c., &c.,
" JOHN SMITH, Gen. Commanding."

Listen now to the same story told by the poet :—

" It was a dread, yet spirit-stirring sight—
The billows foam'd beneath a thousand oars ;
Fast as they land, the red-cross ranks unite,
Legions on legions bright'ning all the shores.
Then banners rise, and cannon signal roars ;
Then peals the warlike thunder of the drum,
Thrills the loud fife, the trumpet flourish pours,
And patriot hopes awake, and doubts are dumb,
For, bold in Freedom's cause, the bands of Ocean come."

These two pieces of composition are so exceedingly different, that it may seem very ridiculous to compare them; yet they really exemplify the principle of which I have spoken. Try to construct a picture out of the elements given you in the despatch, and you will at once feel how your mind is perplexed by extraneous figures. You want to place yourself in imagination on the shores of Portugal, and thence to witness the landing of the British army; but you

don't want to know that General Smith obtained the consent of Admiral Brown; nor that the landing required exactly four hours and thirty-five minutes to effect it. It was only just that, in a despatch to the Commander-in-Chief, poor Smithers, who took care of the baggage, should receive his due meed of the praise, and I sincerely hope that he was promoted. But Smithers is not a poetical figure; and in the effort to construct a great historical picture we are simply teased by him and his blankets.

See, on the other hand, how readily and naturally all the images which Walter Scott has drawn group themselves into a picture; the sea whitening under the oars; the bright uniforms and the brighter steel flashing in the sun; the martial music; the roar of the cannon; the kindling eye, the shout of welcome, which told that in the heart of an oppressed nation hope had dawned again. See all that, and then ask yourselves, was not the hand that drew that picture the hand of a true poet?

Take another instance of the same power. Let any one who has ever witnessed a great fire, study the lozen lines which I am about to read to you, and I am sure that his memory will testify to the truth and the grandeur of the picture which is there drawn. The scene described is, as you will remember, the burning of Rokeby Castle:—

“ In gloomy arch above them spread,
The clouded heaven lowered bloody red;
Beneath, in sombre light, the flood
Appeared to roll in waves of blood.

Then, one by one was heard to fall
The tower, the donjon keep, the hall ;
Each rushing down with thunder sound,
A space the conflagration drowned ;
Till, gathering strength, again it rose,
Announced its triumph in its close,
Shook wide its light the landscape o'er,
Then sunk—and Rokeby was no more.”

I have said that this picture will vividly recal to any one who has himself seen a great fire—that, perhaps, most terrible of all sights. Let me add, if any word-painting—aye, or canvas-painting—could bring such a scene fully before the mind's eye of one who has not seen it, this picture would be entirely successful. But neither poet nor painter can always do this. As in every other instance of man's so-called creative power, the artist cannot create, in the true sense of that word. He can combine the elements, which the imagination of his hearer already possesses, but he cannot give him new elements. It is not quite so easy to define an element in art as it is in chemistry; but every one will understand it who sees for the first time one of Nature's more sublime pictures, such as the Alps, a storm at sea, or a conflagration. From such a sight he receives, to use the common phrase, “a new idea.” He feels that there is something there which no description has ever given him. Probably he feels, too, that there is something which no description *could* have given him; and therefore the real sublimity of the description which I have just read, can be fully appreciated only by one who has himself witnessed such a scene. But by

such a one it will be fully appreciated. This picture is of the simplest kind. Nowhere is the canon to which I before alluded, more rigorously obeyed. The elements of which it consists are so few, that there is scarce any grouping. But mark the skill with which the poet has chosen those few—the dark red sky above; the motion of the flame tossing and stormy, like the waves of a troubled ocean; and then, following one upon another, with a sublime slowness which the very sound of the word expresses—the fall of each massive building, checking for an instant by his own work the progress of the destroyer; and, last of all, the fire itself, victorious over every obstacle, bathing the whole landscape in its triumphant light, then, self-destroyed, sinking at once into darkness. These are the elements of a picture to which we may fairly accord that highest praise—that it is worthy of the awful reality.

In both the pictures which I have read to you there is action, or at least motion; and I think it will be generally admitted, that as this was the kind of word-painting which Walter Scott best loved, so in this he has been most successful. Indeed, in one important respect, it is easier to draw a successful picture of action than a successful picture of still life. *There* we paint as the eye would see it. We paint successively that which happens successively; *here* we are forced to paint successively that which is present to the eye simultaneously. In the former case, therefore, we can place a great many figures successively on our canvas without imposing any

very difficult task upon the imagination of the reader. In the latter case, on the other hand, where the figures are necessarily simultaneous, the poet, if he would not make his picture meagre, must assume the existence in his reader of a considerable imaginative power. Let us see how Walter Scott overcomes this difficulty. I take as an example the picture of still life in which he has been, I think, on the whole, most successful. It is the well-known passage in the "Lady of the Lake," in which the poet describes Loch Katrine as it first presented itself to the eye of Fitz-James:—

“ ——— Gleaming with the setting sun,
 One burnish'd sheet of living gold,
 Loch Katrine lay beneath him roll'd.
 In all her length far winding lay
 With promontory, creek, and bay,
 And islands that empurpled bright,
 Floated amid the livelier light,
 And mountains that like giants stand
 To sentinel enchanted land.
 High on the south huge Benvenue
 Down on the lake in masses threw
 Crag, knolls, and mounds, confusedly hurl'd,
 The fragments of an earlier world.
 A wildering forest feather'd o'er
 His ruin'd sides and summit hoar ;
 While on the north, through middle air,
 Ben-an heaved high his forehead bare.”

It cannot be denied that this description has all the effect of a finished picture, and yet a very moderate imaginative power will suffice to place it before the mind's eye of the reader. But if we examine

it carefully we shall see, that, although a finished picture, it is far from being a minute picture. Its success is due, not to the number of the elements, which is really very small, but to the judgment with which they are chosen, and to the truthful and brilliant colouring in which each of them is drawn. If you would understand the difference between a minute picture and a picture which is complete without being minute, contrast with the passage just read the part of the poem which immediately precedes it, containing a description of the Trosachs Glen, through which Fitz-James is forcing his way. This also is an admirable piece of painting, but it is too minute; the imagination is fatigued by too many details—difficult to be combined into a picture—wholly different from the few strokes of bold drawing and gorgeous colouring to which the other owes *its* completeness.

The fault which to some extent mars the effect of a description, all whose parts are exceedingly beautiful, is, it must be admitted, not very uncommon either in the poetry of our author or in his prose. Most frequently, perhaps, he is betrayed into the commission of this fault by his antiquarian zeal. Certainly, the most striking examples of over-minute drawing are to be found, more especially in his prose works, in passages descriptive of the manners and, above all, of the costume of former times. To the zealous antiquarian this is so entirely a labour of love—every detail, even the most minute, is so sacred in his eyes, that he cannot bring himself to omit one. In the fervour of antiquarian zeal, the

principles of art are forgotten; the imagination of the reader is wearied by the multiplicity of details; the grouping of the elements becomes to him an impossibility, and the effect of the picture is marred.

This is another reason for the fact which we all must have observed, that Scott is more happy in his pictures of action, than in his pictures of still life—more especially, of the still life which precedes action. He is so particular in dressing his figures, so careful to tell us how every strap and buckle was arranged, that, before the picture is complete, our eyes become weary, and the prospect grows dim. But when the figures are dressed, and have once got into action, instantly all mist melts away, and the picture stands before us in all the clear outlines and brilliant colouring of reality.

Less conspicuous than the power of word painting, yet not *inconspicuous* in the poetry of Sir Walter Scott, is one which, for want of a better name, I must call *word-music*. I cannot call it the power of versification, for that word expresses but a part of the idea which I wish to convey. Although more strikingly characteristic of poetry, to which indeed it is generally supposed to be essential, it is not absent from the highest kind of prose. As found in either prose or poetry, it denotes the power of so choosing and arranging the words, that their very sound shall concur in producing the effect which the writer desires. It would detain you too long were I to attempt a metaphysical (or physical) analysis of this power; and although in some in-

stances it admits of explanation, the connection of certain sounds, or combinations of sounds, with certain mental emotions, enabling the one to evoke or assist in evoking the other, will be often found to be an ultimate fact in human nature, not admitting of further analysis. But of the reality of the power there can be no doubt. Let me try to exemplify it to you in the following lines, taken from the second canto of "Marmion"—

. . . "bade the passing knell to toll
For welfare of a parting soul.
Slow o'er the midnight wave it swung ;
Northumbrian rocks in answer rung ;
To Warkworth cell the echoes rolled ;
His beads the wakeful hermit told.

So far was heard the mighty knell,
The stag sprung up on Cheviot Fell,
Spread his broad nostril to the wind,
Listed before, aside, behind ;
Then couched him down beside the hind,
And quaked amid the mountain fern,
To hear that sound so dull and stern."

This very beautiful passage has indeed many merits wholly independent of its music. But who will deny to it that merit? Do we not almost hear in its slow, monosyllabic tones, the sound of that passing bell? And yet, read as a quotation, it is shorn of half its power. For it is the closing movement of a mighty symphony. Grand or beautiful as it may be in itself, the composer would not that it should be heard, severed from the connexion in which he has placed

it. Only the ear which he has educated can feel its whole force. Only in the mind which, under the magic of his art, has passed through other emotions first, can he awaken all that he would awaken. And so it is with the poet. He, too, knows how weakly the most powerful description falls upon the unprepared ear. And if you would feel the full power of such a passage as this, read it as the poet has given it to you. Follow that dark tragedy in all its mingled pathos and terror. Let Walter Scott lead you into that grim vault, and see there the group so sternly drawn—the pitiless inquisitors—the grovelling despair of the one victim—the fierce defiance of the other, abandoned, betrayed, guilty, yet looking unterrified on the almost inconceivable fate which awaited her; and then, the short, stern sentence—the judges flying terrified from their own work—last of all, the stifled groan which told its consummation. And then, read aloud the passage which I have just quoted, and you will feel the significance even of its sound. You will feel that, powerful as it is at all times, upon a mind so prepared it strikes with the awful solemnity of a death knell.

Another power which we expect to find displayed in fiction, whether conveyed in poetry or in prose, is the evolution of human character, not by formal description, but by the course of the story. Remembering the unrivalled powers of this kind afterwards displayed by the author of “Waverley,” we look with great interest to his poems for evidence of the same; but, with one remarkable exception, to

which I shall again refer, the general result of such an inquiry is disappointing. We look in vain for the individualizing power which drew Jonathan Oldbuck or Caleb Balderstone.

Neither, in general, and still with the exception to which I have alluded, does the construction and development of the plot display very high art. If we consult the criticism of his own time, we shall find its sharpest arrows directed against faults in this part of his task. Indeed, in his earlier writings he seems to have assigned to the fable an importance very subordinate to that of the successive pictures which it links together.

Another fault, for which he received severe and not unmerited censure, is the amount of careless, almost prosaic writing, which is to be found in some of his best poems. Nor can he be said to have taken any pains to correct it; on the contrary it appears to have become aggravated. It is, I think, less conspicuous in the first of all his greater poems, "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," than in any subsequent one; and every reader of "Rokeby" will see with regret how much the effect of that otherwise fine poem is impaired by dull and jingling couplets.

A series of magnificent pictures, stirring as a trumpet—brilliant as a summer morn, linked by a versified story, constructed with more or less art, but in which the poetic fire may burn languidly—such seems to have been the conception which Walter Scott in his metrical romances attempted to realize. Certainly it is that conception which he *has* realized; and therefore

there are few cases in which opposing advocates may, by a partial statement of the evidence, obtain such seemingly triumphant conclusions. Counsel for the prosecution will quote line after line of dull faulty writing, and sneeringly ask—Is this poetry? Counsel for the defence will point to the battle scene of “Marmion,” or the starting of Clan Alpine into life, and ask triumphantly—What is finer in the language? In truth, the discrepancy is so great, that men may come, one day or other, to deny the writings of Scott, as they have denied the writings of Homer; and the celebrated New Zealander may, among his other achievements, be enabled, by the unerring rules of criticism, to separate the productions of the genuine bard from the wretched patchwork by which some *littérateur* of the twenty-first century thought proper to join them.

I ask you now to accompany me for a few minutes in a rapid survey of the works themselves, considered in their order of time. There is a peculiar interest in an examination of this kind. For the works of an author, arranged in the order of their production, present to us in some sort his psychological history. And none will dispute the interest which attaches to the psychological history of Walter Scott.

Seldom has the world of letters witnessed a more stirring event than the publication of the “Lay of the Last Minstrel.” Just then the poetic fire of the British School was rather smouldering. The example of Pope had not on the whole operated beneficially. Correctness, as the term was then understood, that

is to say, conformity, not always to nature, but to a somewhat arbitrary system of laws, was the one thing aimed at. Many of us have indeed learned to think that the poets of that day were faulty, even in their notions of correctness ; but at all events, whether the form was correct or not, it was to true poetry but as the statue to the living man. We can readily imagine the sensation produced in such an age by the appearance of the new author. The public turned with absolute relief from stuffed figures to the real living men of Walter Scott. His moss-troopers came down upon the reading world as vigorously as ever did their prototypes on merry Carlisle. And on that world in general the effect was instantaneous.

But the critics did not all surrender quite so readily. Literary conservatism stood aghast or hostile. "Who," said they "is this frightful Radical—a traitor to our glorious Iambic constitution—positively dissents from the regular epic as by law established—what next?"

In this state of Parliamentary opinion, our author did, as other great men have done before and since, "he appealed to the country ;" and certainly any embarrassed Premier might be well satisfied, if his appeal should produce for him such a "working majority" as declared in favour of Walter Scott.

In comparing "The Lay" with the subsequent works of the same author, I think we may say that it is in general more carefully written. It may be, that he had not yet learned to concentrate his power on some few great scenes ; or perhaps, success had not

yet given him the carelessness of conscious strength. Whatever be the cause, the versification of "The Lay" appears to be composed with more general care than perhaps any of the others. The mode in which the story is introduced is in its conception very happy, and is marked by some very exquisite poetry. There are also in "The Lay" word-pictures drawn with great power, as for example, the kindling of the bale fire, the expedition of Deloraine, and the well-known lines upon Melrose. Yet, in this respect, it hardly rises to the level of "Marmion," or the "Lady of the Lake." Indeed, it may be doubted, whether there be any one picture in "The Lay" equal to the burning castle in "Rokeby."

In reading the earliest works of such a man as Walter Scott, we look almost inevitably for some indication of his subsequent career. It is not only when the future is still future—still unknown to us, that we love to read, if possible, its history beforehand. Even when the whole of such a career is already among the certainties of the past, we would fain read it by anticipation. Our fancy loves to travel back to the morn of such a day, and to see in the brightness of the dawn, something that foretells the glories of the meridian.

And so, in reading the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," we ask naturally and eagerly—What is there in this poem which gives promise not merely of others like itself—not merely of the "Lady of the Lake," or "Marmion," but of "Guy Mannering," or the "Anti-quary"? Or, to put the question in another form—

was there in the "Lay of the Last Minstrel" anything which should have enabled the literary world to identify the author of "Waverley?"

Not much, I think ; nothing certainly which could be regarded as decisive. We learn from it, indeed, much of the author's predilections. We read there his love for the manners of a past time ; for the age of chivalry, with all its stirring scenes ; and in William of Deloraine we have the type of a character which at all times he loved to paint—strong, brave, faithful—wholly uneducated, and not over-burdened with brains. On the other hand, there is a conspicuous absence of the great and distinguishing power of the author of "Waverley"—the power of drawing individual character. Not that the author shows any *want* of this power, but that he seeks no opportunity for its exercise. It would almost seem as if he were unconscious that he possessed it. William of Deloraine is not an individual ; he is the representative of a class—a common moss-trooper, in no wise distinguished from hundreds of others, who were equally ready to ride break-neck races, to cut throats, or to steal cows, according to the exigencies of the time. And so it is with the other characters of the poem ; they lack individuality ; they are representative pictures, not portraits.

Neither do we recognize the power of the great novelist in the construction of the plot. It was severely criticised at the time as being improbable and clumsy. But the truth seems to be, that the author did not then look upon the construction of the plot

as a point of primary importance. His work was intended to be, not so much a drawing, as a series of tableaux. The pictures are not meant to illustrate the story. It is the story which is meant to connect the pictures. On the whole, it seems to me that the "Lay of the Last Minstrel" gives but doubtful promise of the "Waverley Novels."

"Marmion" is in some respects very different from the "Lay." Perhaps the most important indication which we gather from it is that of a certain amount of change in the purpose of the writer. If, as has been said, the defects are more marked in this than in the former poem, it must be remembered that it is very much more ambitious. Both in the construction of the fable and in the delineation of character, the poet has attempted to realize a higher ideal than in the "Lay." The character of Marmion has been severely criticized, and is in some respects faulty. Yet, had it been entirely successful, it must have ranked as a work of art much higher than any character in the "Lay." I have said that Deloraine is a representative, and therefore, in a certain sense, a common-place picture. But Marmion is a portrait, and a very ambitious portrait; not like the traditional heroes or villains of inferior artists, all white, or all black, but a very mixed character—able, brave, nay, as far as his country was concerned, heroic; but in the pursuit of his own interest, or his own pleasure, selfish, unrelenting, treacherous. To draw such a character with perfect success would be a work of the very highest art; and while we can

point out faults—glaring faults, in the picture, we cannot fairly deny either that the design was lofty, or that its execution was marked by a great measure of success.

So, too, of Constance. It is in many respects a faulty portrait. But it *is* a portrait, not a representative picture, and therefore, as it seems to me, an attempt to realize a higher—certainly a more characteristic ideal.

We can also see the fable beginning to emerge from a subordinate position. The plot in “Marmion” is complicated and obscure, and has received well-merited censure. But a large part, even of its faults, is due to the more ambitious design of the author. In truth, “Marmion” is his first novel.”

Comparing now the poetic genius displayed in these two works, we see that here, too, Marmion is more ambitious. In painting the midnight tribunal of Holy Isle, and notably, the battle-field of Flodden, Scott has attempted a larger and more difficult work than any to be found in the “Lay.” Here, however, the praise which we give to the grandeur of the design is unqualified by any thought of failure in the execution. Of the first I have spoken already; I would add a few remarks upon the other.

“Flodden Field” is, perhaps, the poetical *chef d'œuvre* of Walter Scott. Even Jeffrey, in his somewhat harsh criticism of the poem, pronounces it to be the greatest battle-piece that was ever composed. It can well bear analysis; and if it be not profanation to take to pieces, as it were, so grand a work, we

may see in it three great pictures. Let us contemplate them in their order.

Clouds and darkness are over the first. Dimly through the smoke-wreath that wraps the canvas we fancy, rather than see, the swift, silent advance of the Scottish army. Silent but for their rapid tread, or, ever and anon, the voice of that solitary trumpet that

“ Told England from his mountain throne
King James did rushing come.”

Terribly indeed is that silence broken in the shout which tells that within that cloud the opposing hosts have met; but still the dark canopy hangs over the field, and we sympathize with the impatience of the squires, who can neither aid their master, nor even learn his fate. And now, as the wind disperses the cloud, we see the whole battle pass in confused grandeur before us.

“ ——— The ridge of mingled spears
Above the brightening cloud appears,
And in the smoke the pennons flew
As in the storm the white sea-mew;
Then marked they, dashing broad and far,
The broken billows of the war;
And plumed crests of chieftains brave
Floating like foam upon the wave.”

A moment our eyes are dazzled by the multiplicity of the objects presented to us; the next, one group stands prominently out, and in its individual brilliancy Flodden, its armies and its battle, fade from our sight.

Widely different is the next picture. All the clouds and turmoil of the great battle have vanished, and the eye is fixed by two lonely figures—the conscience-stricken dying warrior, and the pitying girl who watches by his side. Essential to the story, it is but an episode in the battle of Flodden—an episode which the poet has interposed with great art between the wild, fierce, varying drama of the first picture and the stern tragedy of the last. Again, welcomed by the last triumphant tones of that warlike spirit, the storm of battle sweeps across the canvas, and the single figures pass away.

Unrelieved by the changeful fortune which marks the first picture, unsoftened by the pathos of the second, the last is drawn in the sternest colours. There, upon that “darkening heath,” the poet has shown you the remnant of the Scottish army grouped in despairing faithfulness round their unfortunate king; all hope gone—unable to conquer—refusing to yield—falling man by man under the fierce onset of the English—

“ Each stepping where his comrade stood
The instant that he fell.”

And, last of all, as the colours fade in the twilight, we see the destroying army, shattered by their own victory, slowly retiring from the work they had finished,

“ As mountain waves from wasted lands
Sweep back to ocean blue.”

On the whole, despite of the greater popularity of the “Lay,” I cannot but regard “Marmion” as an

advance, and in some respects an advance in the direction of "Waverley."

In "The Lady of the Lake" the poetical genius of Scott is usually supposed to have culminated. No doubt, at least, is entertained as to its superiority to the two which succeeded it, and by most writers it would, probably, be preferred either to "Marmion" or to the "Lay." Yet no one scene in the "Lady of the Lake" equals "Flodden Field" in grandeur, and to the general reader its uniform versification might seem monotonous. In what, then, consists its superior charm? This is not far to seek. The "Lady of the Lake" excels "Marmion" in some of the most important qualities of a poetical story. In the first place, the fable is constructed with much greater skill. Not meagre, as in the "Lay," nor holding a subordinate place; it is, on the other hand, free from the perplexed obscurity which disfigures the plot of "Marmion." The incidents succeed one another naturally, and—no small merit—rapidly. Again, if there be in the "Lady of the Lake" no one picture which equals in grandeur—a grandeur derived largely from its subject—the battle in "Marmion," the number of brilliantly-drawn scenes is much greater. The sudden appearance of Clan Alpine, starting into life in the seeming loneliness of Ben Ledi, and their as sudden disappearance at the word of Roderick, is little, if at all, inferior to the grand painting which we have been examining. Probably many readers would prefer it. The description of Lough Katrine, of the Island, the distant approach of Clan Alpine

along the lake, the speeding of the Fiery Cross, and the appearance of Ellen in the guard-room, are all in the highest style of art.

But that which most concerns us now, that which throws most light on the intellectual history of the author, is the still further advance here made in the delineation of character. Walter Scott is not very famous for his heroines, but Ellen is certainly a successful portrait. Indeed wonderfully successful as compared with the two former, of whom Clara is insipid, and Margaret is nothing at all but a charming young lady, whose duty is to be married at the proper time to the proper gentleman. The contrast between Fitz-James—brave, gay, fickle; and Roderick—haughty, dark, vindictive, but true, and not ungenerous—is very finely drawn; and if the features of the hero are somewhat unmarked and commonplace, we must remember that no charge has been more frequently brought against the author of “Waverley.” The popular verdict, then, which places the “Lady of the Lake” at the head of Walter Scott’s poems, may fairly be justified, not by its supremacy in any one point, but by the amount of varied excellence which it possesses. Still, I think, there is as yet no sufficient evidence to identify the great novelist. Of the author’s predilections, his passionate love for the age of chivalry, his veneration for the most trifling peculiarity of a past time—of all *that* we have ample proof, and we have endeavoured to trace in its infancy that power which had so glorious a manhood. But there is something still wanting.

That something seems to me to be entirely supplied by "Robbery." It is, of course, easy to be wise after the event, but I cannot help thinking that there is now enough to identify the author of "Waverley." Here we see, no longer in its infancy, the power of the great artist, not so much to paint human character, as to make character paint itself. If you would fully know the growth of this power in the mind of Scott, place side by side the characters of Deloraine and Bertram as he has drawn them, and study them attentively. Of the first, I have said already, that he is a representative character. So, too, in a certain sense, is Bertram—indeed, the poet tells us so. If Deloraine is a representative moss-trooper, Bertram is a representative buccaneer. But he is more. The poet has given us here a work of much higher art. Self-drawn, with a power which even Scott has rarely exceeded, the portrait of Bertram stands out from the canvas in all the strong lines of individual life. You might have a regiment of Deloraines—you could not have a regiment of Bertrams. And the effect of the drawing, powerful as it would be in itself, is marvellously heightened by the double contrast in which the poet has shown it—rugged and dark beside the gentle figure of Wilfred—almost bright when relieved against the blackness of Oswald. The whole scene in which these two are contrasted—the deeper, darker, but trembling villain, trying to worm out, without asking it, the fatal secret, and constantly baffled by the rough effrontery of his companion—

is hardly surpassed by anything in all Scott's works, prose or poetry. And of Wilfred I may perhaps say, that nowhere has Scott drawn a more ambitious portrait. It is an attempt to make a gentle, shrinking, timid man, an object, not of compassion only, but of respect; and it is an attempt entirely successful. The triumph of the innate nobleness of his nature over physical, and, in a certain sense, moral weakness, commands our respect as perhaps nothing else can. But, in truth, Rokeby is full of successful portraits. Bertram, Oswald, Denzil, Edmund, Wilfred, Matilda, Redmond—no two of these are alike, and all are admirably drawn. Had Walter Scott been as careful in the versification of "Rokeby" as he was in the versification of the "Lay," Rokeby would probably have been placed at the head of his poetical works. Regarded merely as a novel, it is not only superior to the rest, but is absolutely of the highest order of merit. It is, moreover, just such a novel as the author of "Waverley" might have written.

I can give but a few words to the last of our author's great poems—"The Lord of the Isles." If "Rokeby" be a successful novel, this, on the other hand, is not a novel at all. It is a historical poem upon a noble theme—the struggle which vindicated the independence of Scotland; and I think it would be much improved if it were relieved of all claim to the other title. The loves of Ronald and Edith, which are unfortunately *not* reciprocal, might with great advantage be struck out. They have no con-

nection with the main business of the poem; and when we are compelled to look at them, we cannot fail to see that the gentleman is disappointed, and that, if the lady is not, at least her chance of matrimonial happiness seems exceedingly questionable.

Yet, though less striking than its predecessors, the "Lord of the Isles" contains some very beautiful poetry. Instance more especially the night-watch in the island of Skye. The falling asleep of the page, followed by his murder, is given with great truth and force. The single combat between Bruce and Sir Henry Boune, at the eve of the Battle of Bannockburn, is also powerfully painted.

It is commonly said that the Battle of Bannockburn is drawn with less power than the Battle of Flodden. Certainly, regarded as a picture, it is not so grand; but that is largely due to a difference in the author's purpose. In the second case, his only object is to paint a great picture. He regards the battle altogether with the eye of an artist—its details are indifferent to him, perhaps distasteful, and so he is at liberty to throw over his description a cloudy grandeur, which greatly heightens the effect.

Bannockburn, on the other hand, he does not, and could not, regard simply with the eye of an artist. To a patriot like Scott, every detail of that great battle is sacred. He lingers proudly over every incident—every military manœuvre—every turn of fortune, which marked that (we may call it) charter-field of Scotland. The principles of art would have required a less minute account. But the patriot is

too strong for the artist; and in criticising the picture of Bannockburn we may fairly say, not that it is as grand as Flodden, for it is not, but that it would be difficult to improve it, consistently with the preservation of a minuteness which is almost that of a despatch.

With this hurried sketch I must close the subject. Many of the minor poems well deserve a lengthened notice. Some of his ballads in particular are exceedingly beautiful, but the necessary limits of a lecture forbid me from entering into them.

In casting our eyes back over the space we have traversed, we ask naturally—what are its limits? It is permitted to none, even the most gifted, to range over the poetic field in all its wide extent. The temple of Nature is too vast to allow any to minister in her every shrine. In which of these shrines has Walter Scott been our guide? Is he the hierophant of Eleusinian mysteries? Is he the expounder of thoughts and feelings, which only an initiated few can comprehend; or does he minister to a larger worship? He is—and I say it with no feeling of disparagement—the priest of the outer court. Few indeed can penetrate to the innermost shrine. But there is many an artificial grotto, and many a false priest, who excludes the light because he would have you worship a base idol—because he would have you see, in an obscurity which himself has made, the darkness that veils the true sanctuary. So is it never with Walter Scott. He revels in the light. Whatever be his true stature, at least he lets you see it. He raises no mist

that he may present to you a magnified image of himself.

Would that we could banish from the world of poetry an exclusiveness which hides from each of us so much real beauty. Why should a worship be here so sectarian, which is in painting so truly catholic. Raphael, Teniers, Salvator Rosa—who does not feel how different are the emotions which these names evoke; yet who will deny to each one of them the title of a great painter. Not alone in a “Transfiguration,” or a “Holy Family,” have we learned to trace the inspired hand of genius. We can read it upon the rocks which Salvator has peopled with outlaws—even in the ale-house which Teniers has filled with Dutch boors. Why should our poetic vision be more limited. Why can we not admire—worship if you will, the genius of Wordsworth, or of Tennyson, without being blind to the glories of Byron, or of Scott?

I repeat; it is in no disparaging tone that I have called Scott “the priest of the outer court.” For we do a base wrong to the glories of that Great Temple, if we think that only in its inmost recesses are to be found those forms of grandeur, and beauty, and love, which are the objects of the poet’s adoration. They are everywhere—throughout all nature—in the world of spirit, and in the world of matter—in thoughts that lie almost too deep for utterance—in the passions that float, brilliant or terrible, upon the stream of life. They meet us in the crowded street; the smoke and dust of the battle cannot hide them—on the Alpine

peak—in the depths of the untrodden forest—they are there too.

And if you would know whether Walter Scott was a true priest of Nature, ask, not in *what* shrine he ministered, but whether his homage was paid with the true impassioned loyalty of a poet's heart. I am not afraid of the answer.



THE
MYSTERY OF LIFE AND ITS ARTS.

BY
JOHN RUSKIN, ESQ.





THE
MYSTERY OF LIFE AND ITS ARTS.

WHEN I accepted the privilege of addressing you to-day, I was not aware of a restriction with respect to the topics of discussion which may be brought before this Society—a restriction which, though entirely wise and right under the circumstances contemplated in its introduction, would necessarily have disabled me, thinking as I think, from preparing any lecture for you on the subject of art in a form which might be permanently useful. Pardon me, therefore, in so far as I must transgress such limitation; for indeed my infringement will be of the letter—not of the spirit—of your commands. In whatever I may say touching the religion which has been the foundation of art, or the policy which has contributed to its power, if I offend one, I shall offend all; for I shall take no note of any separations in creeds, or antagonisms in parties: neither do I fear that ultimately I shall offend any, by proving—or at least stating as capable of positive proof—the connection of all that is best in the crafts and arts of man, with the simplicity of his faith, and the sincerity of his patriotism.

But I speak to you under another disadvantage, by which I am checked in frankness of utterance, not here only, but everywhere ; namely, that I am never fully aware how far my audiences are disposed to give me credit for real knowledge of my subject, or how far they grant me attention only because I have been sometimes thought an ingenious or pleasant essayist or speaker upon it. For I have had what, in many respects, I boldly call the misfortune, to set my words sometimes prettily together ; not without a foolish vanity in the poor knack that I had of doing so, until I was heavily punished for this pride, by finding that many people thought of the words only, and cared nothing for their meaning. Happily, therefore, the power of using such pleasant language—if indeed it ever were mine—is passing away from me ; and whatever I am now able to say at all, I find myself forced to say with great plainness. For my thoughts have changed also, as my words have ; and whereas in earlier life, what little influence I obtained was due perhaps chiefly to the enthusiasm with which I was able to dwell on the beauty of the physical clouds, and of their colours in the sky ; so all the influence I now desire to retain must be due to the earnestness with which I am endeavouring to trace the form and beauty of another kind of cloud than those ; the bright cloud, of which it is written—

“ What is your life ? It is even as a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”

I suppose few people reach the middle or latter

period of their age, without having at some moment of change or disappointment felt the truth of those bitter words ; and been startled by the fading of the sunshine from the cloud of their life, into the sudden agony of the knowledge that the fabric of it was as fragile as a dream, and the endurance of it as transient as the dew. But it is not always that, even at such times of melancholy surprise, we can enter into any true perception that this human life shares, in the nature of it, not only the evanescence, but the mystery of the cloud ; that its avenues are wreathed in darkness, and its forms and courses no less fantastic, than spectral and obscure ; so that not only in the vanity which we cannot grasp, but in the shadow which we cannot pierce, it is true of this cloudy life of ours, that "man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain."

And least of all, whatever may have been the eagerness of our passions, or the height of our pride, are we able to understand in its depth the third and most solemn character in which our life is like those clouds of heaven ; that to it belongs not only their transience, not only their mystery, but also their power ; that in the cloud of the human soul there is a fire stronger than the lightning, and a grace more precious than the rain ; and that though of the good and evil it shall one day be said alike, that the place that knew them knows them no more, there is an infinite separation between those whose brief presence had there been a blessing, like the mist of

Eden that went up from the earth to water the garden, and those whose place knew them only as a drifting and changeful shade, of whom the heavenly sentence is, that they are "wells without water; clouds that are carried with a tempest, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever."

To those among us, however, who have lived long enough to form some just estimate of the rate of the changes which are, hour by hour in accelerating catastrophe, manifesting themselves in the laws, the arts, and the creeds of men, it seems to me, that now at least, if never at any former time, the thoughts of the true nature of our life, and of its powers and responsibilities, should present themselves with absolute sadness and sternness. And although I know that this feeling is much deepened in my own mind by disappointment, which, by chance, has attended the greater number of my cherished purposes, I do not for that reason distrust the feeling itself, though I am on my guard against an exaggerated degree of it: nay, I rather believe that in periods of new effort and violent change, disappointment is a wholesome medicine; and that in the secret of it, as in the twilight so beloved by Titian, we may see the colours of things with deeper truth than in the most dazzling sunshine. And because these truths about the works of men, which I want to bring to-day before you, are most of them sad ones, though at the same time helpful; and because also I believe that your kind Irish hearts will answer more gladly to the truthful expression of a personal

feeling than to the exposition of an abstract principle, I will permit myself so much unreserved speaking of my own causes of regret, as may enable you to make just allowance for what, according to your sympathies, you will call either the bitterness, or the insight, of a mind which has surrendered its best hopes, and been foiled in its favourite aims.

I spent the ten strongest years of my life, (from twenty to thirty,) in endeavouring to show the excellence of the work of the man whom I believed, and rightly believed, to be the greatest painter of the schools of England since Reynolds. I had then perfect faith in the power of every great truth or beauty to prevail ultimately, and take its right place in usefulness and honor; and I strove to bring the painter's work into this due place, while the painter was yet alive. But he knew, better than I, the uselessness of talking about what people could not see for themselves. He always discouraged me scornfully, ~~even~~ when he thanked me—and he died before even the superficial effect of my work was visible. I went on, however, thinking I could at least be of use to the public, if not to him, in proving his power. My books got talked about a little. The prices of modern pictures, generally, rose, and I was beginning to take some pleasure in a sense of gradual victory, when, fortunately or unfortunately, an opportunity of perfect trial undeceived me at once, and for ever. The Trustees of the National Gallery commissioned me to arrange the Turner drawings there, and permitted me to prepare three hundred examples of his studies

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from nature, for exhibition at Kensington. At Kensington they were and are, placed for exhibition : but they are not exhibited, for the room in which they hang is always empty.

Well—this showed me at once, that those ten years of my life had been, in their chief purpose, lost. For that, I did not so much care ; I had, at least, learned my own business thoroughly, and should be able, as I fondly supposed, after such a lesson, now to use my knowledge with better effect. But what I did care for, was the—to me frightful—discovery, that the most splendid genius in the arts might be permitted by Providence to labor and perish uselessly ; that in the very fineness of it there might be something rendering it invisible to ordinary eyes ; but, that with this strange excellence, faults might be mingled which would be as deadly as its virtues were vain ; that the glory of it was perishable, as well as invisible, and the gift and grace of it might be to us, as snow in summer, and as rain in harvest.

That was the first mystery of life to me. But, while my best energy was given to the study of painting, I had put collateral effort, more prudent, if less enthusiastic, into that of architecture ; and in this I could not complain of meeting with no sympathy. Among several personal reasons which caused me to desire that I might give this, my closing lecture on the subject of art here, in Ireland, one of the chief was, that in reading it, I should stand near the beautiful building,—the engineers' school of your college,—which was the first realization I had the joy to

see, of the principles I had, until then, been endeavouring to teach, but which, alas, is now, to me, no more than the richly canopied monument of one of the most earnest souls that ever gave itself to the arts, and one of my truest and most loving friends, Benjamin Woodward. Nor was it here in Ireland only that I received the help of Irish sympathy and genius. When, to another friend, Sir Thomas Deane, with Mr. Woodward, was entrusted the building of the museum at Oxford, the best details of the work were executed by sculptors who had been born and trained here; and the first window of the façade of the building, in which was inaugurated the study of natural science in England, in true fellowship with literature, was carved from my design by an Irish sculptor.

You may perhaps think that no man ought to speak of disappointment, to whom, even in one branch of labor, so much success was granted. Had Mr. Woodward now been beside me, I had not so spoken; but his gentle and passionate spirit was cut off from the fulfilment of its purposes, and the work we did together is now become vain. It may not be so in future; but the architecture we endeavoured to introduce is inconsistent alike with the reckless luxury, the deforming mechanism, and the squalid misery of modern cities; among the formative fashions of the day, aided, especially in England, by ecclesiastical sentiment, it indeed obtained notoriety; and sometimes behind an engine furnace, or a railroad bank, you may detect the pathetic discord of its momentary grace, and, with toil, decipher its floral carvings

choked with soot. I felt answerable to the schools I loved, only for their injury. I perceived that this new portion of my strength had also been spent in vain ; and from amidst streets of iron, and palaces of crystal, shrank back at last to the carving of the mountain and colour of the flower.

And still I could tell of failure, and failure repeated, as years went on ; but I have trespassed enough on your patience to show you, in part, the causes of my discouragement. Now let me more deliberately tell you its results. You know there is a tendency in the minds of many men, when they are heavily disappointed in the main purposes of their life, to feel, and perhaps in warning, perhaps in mockery, to declare, that life itself is a vanity. Because it has disappointed them, they think its nature is of disappointment always, or at best, of pleasure, that can be grasped in imagination only ; that the cloud of it has no strength nor fire within ; but is a painted cloud only, to be delighted in, yet despised. You know how beautifully Pope has expressed this particular phase of thought :—

“ Meanwhile opinion gilds, with varying rays,
These painted clouds that beautify our days.
Each want of happiness by hope supplied,
And each vacuity of sense, by pride.
Hope builds as fast as Knowledge can destroy ;
In Folly's cup, still laughs the bubble joy.
One pleasure past, another still we gain,
And not a vanity is given in vain.”

But the effect of failure upon my own mind has been

just the reverse of this. The more that my life disappointed me, the more solemn and wonderful it became to me. It seemed, contrarily to Pope's saying, that the vanity of it *was* indeed given in vain ; but that there was something behind the veil of it, which was not vanity. It became to me not a painted cloud, but a terrible and impenetrable one : not a mirage, which vanished as I drew near, but a pillar of darkness, to which I was forbidden to draw near. For I saw that both my own failure, and such success in petty things as in its various triumph seemed to me worse than failure, came from the want of sufficiently earnest effort to understand the whole law and meaning of existence, and to bring it to noble and due end ; as, on the other hand, I saw more and more clearly that all enduring success in the arts, or in any other occupation, had come from the ruling of lower purposes, not by a conviction of their nothingness, but by a solemn faith in the advancing power of human nature, or in the promise, however dimly apprehended, that the mortal part of it would one day be swallowed up in immortality ; and that, indeed, the arts themselves never had reached any vital strength or honour but in the effort to proclaim this immortality, and in the service either of great and just religion, or of some unselfish patriotism, and law of such national life as must be the foundation of religion. Nothing that I have ever said is more true or necessary—nothing has been more misunderstood or misapplied—than my strong assertion, that the arts can never be right themselves,

unless their motive is right. It is misunderstood this way : weak painters, who have never learned their business, and cannot lay a true line, continually come to me, crying out—"Look at this picture of mine ; it *must* be good, I had such a lovely motive. I have put my whole heart into it, and taken years to think over its treatment." Well, the only answer for these people is—if one had the cruelty to make it—"Sir, you cannot think over *anything* any number of years,—you haven't the head to do it ; and though you had fine motives, strong enough to make you burn yourself in a slow fire, if only first you could paint a picture, you can't paint one, nor half an inch of one ; you haven't the hand to do it."

But, far more decisively we have to say to the men who *do* know their business, or may know it if they choose—"Sir, you have this gift, and a mighty one ; see that you serve your nation faithfully with it. It is a greater trust than ships and armies : you might cast *them* away, if you were their captain, with less treason to your people than in casting your own glorious power away, and serving the devil with it instead of men. Ships and armies you may replace if they are lost, but a great intellect, once abused, is a curse to the earth for ever.

This, then, I meant by saying that the arts *must* have noble motive. This also I said respecting them, that they never had prospered, nor could prosper, but when they had such true purpose, and were devoted to the proclamation of divine truth or law.

And yet I saw also that they had always failed in this proclamation—that poetry, and sculpture, and painting, though only great when they strove to teach us something about the gods, never had taught us anything trustworthy about the gods, but had always betrayed their trust in the crisis of it, and, with their powers at the full reach, became ministers to pride and to lust. And I felt also, with increasing amazement, the unconquerable apathy in ourselves the hearers, no less than in these the teachers; and that, while the wisdom and rightness of every act and art of life could only be consistent with a right understanding of the ends of life, we were all plunged as in a languid dream—our heart fat, and our eyes heavy, and our ears closed, lest the inspiration of hand or voice should reach us—lest we should see with our eyes, and understand with our hearts, and be healed.

This intense apathy in all of us is the first great mystery of life; it stands in the way of every perception, every virtue. There is no making ourselves feel enough astonishment at it. That the occupations or pastimes of life should have no motive, is understandable; but that life itself should have no motive—that we neither care to find out what it may lead to, nor to guard against its being for ever taken away from us—here is a mystery indeed. For just suppose I were able to call at this moment to any one in this audience by name, and to tell him positively that I knew a large estate had been lately left

to him on some curious conditions ; but that, though I knew it was large, I did not know how large, nor even where it was—whether in the East Indies or the West, or in England, or at the Antipodes. I only knew it was a vast estate, and that there was a chance of his losing it altogether if he did not soon find out on what terms it had been left to him. Suppose I were able to say this positively to any single man in this audience, and he knew that I did not speak without warrant, do you think that he would rest content with that vague knowledge, if it were anywise possible to obtain more? Would he not give every energy to find some trace of the facts, and never rest till he had ascertained where this place was, and what it was like? And suppose he were a young man, and all he could discover by his best endeavour was, that the estate was never to be his at all, unless he persevered during certain years of probation in an orderly and industrious life ; but that, according to the circumspection of his conduct, the portion of the estate assigned to him would be greater or less, so that it literally depended on his behaviour from day to day whether he got ten thousand a-year, or thirty thousand a-year, or nothing whatever—would you not think it strange if the youth never troubled himself to satisfy the conditions in any way, nor even to know what was required of him, but lived exactly as he chose, and never inquired whether his chances of the estate were increasing or passing away. Well, you know that this is actually and literally so with the greater number of the educated persons now living in

Christian countries. Certainly nearly every man and woman, in any company such as this, outwardly professes to believe—and a large number unquestionably think they believe—much more than this; not only that a quite unlimited estate is in prospect for them if they please the Holder of it, but that the infinite contrary of such a possession—an estate of perpetual misery, is in store for them if they displease this great Land-Holder, this great Heaven-Holder. And yet there is not one in a thousand of these human souls that cares to think, for ten minutes of the day, where this estate is, or how beautiful it is, or what kind of life they are to lead in it, or what kind of life they must lead to obtain it. You fancy that you care to know this: so little do you care that, probably, at this moment many of you are displeased with me for talking of the matter! You came to hear about the art of this world, not about the life of the next, and you are provoked with me for talking of what you can hear any Sunday in church. But do not be afraid. I will tell you something before you go about pictures, and carvings, and pottery, and what else you would like better to hear of than the other world. Nay, perhaps you say we want you to talk of pictures and pottery, because we are sure that you know something of them, and you know nothing of the other world. Well—I don't. That is quite true. But the very strangeness and mystery of which I urge you to take notice is in this—that I do not, nor you either. Can you answer a single bold question unflinchingly about that other world—Are you sure

there is a heaven? Sure there is a hell? Sure that men are dropping before your faces through the pavements of these streets into eternal fire, or sure that they are not? Sure that at your own death you are going to be delivered from all sorrow, to be endowed with all virtue, to be gifted with all felicity, and raised into perpetual companionship with a King, compared to whom the kings of the earth are as grasshoppers and the nations as the dust of His feet? Are you sure of this? or, if not sure, do any of us so much as care to make it sure? and, if not, how can anything that we do be right—how can anything we think be wise; what honour can there be in the arts that amuse us, or what profit in the possessions that please.

Is not this a mystery of life?

But farther, you may, perhaps, think it a beneficent ordinance for the generality of men that they do not, with earnestness or anxiety, dwell on such questions of the future; and that the business of the day could not be done if this kind of thought were taken by all of us for the morrow. Be it so: but at least we might anticipate that the greatest and wisest of us, who were evidently the appointed teachers of the rest, would set themselves apart to seek out whatever could be surely known of the future destinies of their race, and to teach this in no rhetorical or ambiguous manner, but in the plainest and most severely earnest words.

Now, the highest representatives of men who have thus endeavoured, during the Christian era, to search

ut these deep things, and relate them, are Dante and Milton. There are none who for earnestness of thought, for mastery of word, can be classed with these. I am not at present, mind you, speaking of persons set apart in any priestly or pastoral office, to deliver creeds to us, or doctrines; but of men who try to discover and set forth, as far as by human intellect is possible, the facts of the other world. Divines may perhaps teach us how to arrive there, but only these two poets have in any powerful manner striven to discover, or in any definite words pressed to tell, what we shall see and become there, or how those upper and nether worlds are, and have been, inhabited.

And what have they told us? Milton's account of the most important event in his whole system of the universe, the fall of the angels, is evidently unbelievable to himself; and the more so, that it is wholly founded on, and in a great part spoiled and degraded from, Hesiod's account of the decisive war of the younger gods with the Titans. The rest of his poem is a picturesque drama, in which every artifice of invention is visibly and consciously employed, not a single fact being for an instant conceived as tenable by any living faith. Dante's conception is far more intense, and, by himself, for the time, not to be escaped from; it is indeed a vision, but a vision only, and that one of the wildest that ever entranced a soul—a dream in which every grotesque type or phantasy of heathen tradition is renewed and adorned; and the destinies of the

Christian Church, under their most sacred symbols, become literally subordinate to the praise, and are only to be understood by the aid, of one dear Florentine maiden.

Do you know, as I strive more sternly with this strange lethargy and trance in myself, and awake to the meaning and power of life, it seems daily more amazing to me that men such as these should dare to play with the most precious truths, (or the most deadly untruths,) by which the whole human race listening to them could be informed, or deceived ;—all the world their audiences for ever, with pleased ear and passionate heart ;—and yet, to this submissive infinitude of souls, and evermore succeeding and succeeding multitude, hungry for bread of life, they do but play upon sweetly modulated pipes ; with pompous nomenclature adorn the councils of hell ; touch a troubadour's guitar to the courses of the suns ; and fill the openings of eternity, before which prophets have veiled their faces, and which angels desire to look into, with idle puppets of their scholastic imagination, and melancholy lights of frantic faith, in their lost mortal love.

Is not this a mystery of life ? But more. We have to remember that these two great teachers were both of them warped in their temper and thwarted in their search for truth. They were men of intellectual war, unable, through darkness of controversy, or stress of personal grief, to discern where their own ambition modified their utterances of the moral law ; or their own agony mingled with their anger at its

violation. But greater men than these have been—men, innocent hearted—too great for contest. Men, like Homer and Shakespeare, of so unrecognized personality, that it disappears in future ages, and becomes ghostly, like the tradition of a lost heathen god. Men, therefore, to whose unoffended, uncondemning sight, the whole of human nature reveals itself in a pathetic weakness, with which they will not strive, or in mournful and transitory strength, which they dare not praise. And all Pagan and Christian civilization thus becomes subject to them. It does not matter how little, or how much, any of us have read, either of Homer or Shakespeare: everything round us, in substance, or in thought, has been moulded by them. All Greek gentlemen were educated under Homer. All Roman gentlemen, by Greek literature. All Italian, and French, and English gentlemen, by Roman literature, and by its principles. Of the scope of Shakespeare, I will say only, that the intellectual measure of every man since born, in the domains of creative thought, may be assigned to him, according to the degree in which he has been taught by Shakespeare. Well, what do these two men, centres of mortal intelligence, deliver to us of conviction, respecting what it most behoves that intelligence to grasp. What is their hope; their crown of rejoicing? what manner of exhortation have they for us; or of rebuke? what lies next their own hearts, and dictates their undying words? Have they any peace to promise to our unrest—any redemption to our misery?

Take Homer first, and think if there is any image of human fate than the great Homeri. The main features in the character of Achilles are its intense desire of justice, and its tender affection. And in that bitter song of the this man, though aided continually by the of the gods, and burning with the desire of in his heart, becomes yet, through ill-governed passion, the most unjust of men; and, full of deepest tenderness in his heart, becomes yet, through ill-governed passion, the most cruel of men; alike in love and in friendship, he loses, first his mistress, and then his friend; for the sake of the he surrenders to death the armies of his own for the sake of the other, he surrenders all. Can a man lay down his life for his friend? Yea—can his dead friend, this Achilles, though goddess and goddess-taught, give up his kingdom, his crown and his life—casts alike the innocent and with himself, into one gulf of slaughter, and last by the hand of the basest of his adversaries. Is not this a mystery of life?

But what, then, is the message to us of our poet, and searcher of hearts, after fifteen hundred years of Christian faith have been numbered in the graves of men? Are his words more cheerful than the heathen's—is his hope more near—his truth more sure—his reading of fate more happy? A He differs from the Heathen poet chiefly in that he recognizes, for deliverance, no gods hand; and that, by petty chance—by mor

folly—by broken message—by fool's tyranny—or traitor's snare, the strongest and most righteous are brought to their ruin, and perish without word of hope. With necessary truth of insight, he indeed ascribes the power and modesty of habitual devotion, to the gentle and the just. The death-bed of Katharine is bright with vision of angels ; and the great soldier-king, standing by his few dead, acknowledges the presence of the hand, that can save alike, by many or by few. But from those, who with deepest spirit, meditate, and with deepest passion, mourn, there are no such words as these ; nor in their hearts such consolations. Instead of the perpetual sense of the helpful presence of the Deity, which through all heathen tradition is the source of heroic strength, in battle, in exile, and in the valley of the shadow of death, we find only in the great Christian poet, the consciousness of a moral law, through which "the gods are just, and of our pleasant vices make instruments to scourge us;" and of the resolved arbitration of the destinies, that conclude into precision of doom what we feebly and blindly began ; and force us, when our indiscretion serves us, and our deepest plots do pall, to the confession, that "there's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will."

Is not this a mystery of life ?

Now observe : about this human life that is to be, or that is, the wise religious men tell us nothing that we can trust ; and the wise contemplative men, nothing that can give us peace. But there is yet a third class, to whom we may turn—the wise

practical men. We have sat at the feet of the poets who sang of heaven, and they have told us their dreams. We have listened to the poets who sang of earth, and they have chanted to us dirges, and words of despair. But there is one class of men more :—men, not capable of vision, nor sensitive to sorrow, but firm of purpose—practised in business ; learned in all that can be, by handling, known. Men, whose hearts and hopes are wholly in this present world, from whom, therefore, we may surely learn, at least, how, at present, conveniently to live in it. What will *they* say to us, or show us by example? These kings—these councillors—these statesmen and builders of kingdoms—these capitalists and men of business, who weigh the earth and the dust of it in a balance. They know the world, surely ; and what is the mystery of life to us, is none to them. They can surely show us how to live, while we live, and to gather out of the present world what is best.

I think I can best tell you their answer, by telling you a dream I had once. For though I am no poet, I have dreams sometimes :—I dreamed I was at a child's May-day party, in which every means of entertainment had been provided for them, by a wise and kind host. It was in a stately house, with beautiful gardens attached to it ; and the children had been set free in the rooms and gardens, with no care whatever but how to pass their afternoon rejoicingly. They did not, indeed, know much about what was to happen next day ; and some of them, I thought, were a little frightened, because there was a chance of

their being sent to a new school where there were examinations ; but they kept the thoughts of that out of their heads as well as they could, and resolved to enjoy themselves. The house, I said, was in a beautiful garden, and in the garden were all kinds of flowers ; sweet grassy banks for rest ; and smooth lawns for play ; and pleasant streams and woods ; and rocky places for climbing. And the children were happy for a little while, but presently they separated themselves into parties ; and then each party declared, it would have a piece of the garden for its own, and that none of the others should have anything to do with that piece. Next, they quarrelled violently, which pieces they would have ; and at last the boys took up the thing practically, and fought in the flower-beds till there was hardly a flower left standing ; there they trampled down each other's bits of the garden out of spite ; and the girls cried till they could cry no more ; and so they all lay down at last breathless in the ruin, and waited for the time when they were to be taken home in the evening. Meanwhile, the children in the house had been making themselves happy also in their manner. For them, there had been provided every kind of in-doors pleasure : there was music for them to dance to ; and the library was open, with all manner of amusing books ; and there was a museum, full of the most curious shells, and animals, and birds ; and there was a workshop, with lathes and carpenter's tools, for the ingenious boys ; and there were pretty fantastic dresses, for the girls to dress in ; and there were micro-

scopes and kaleidoscopes ; and whatever toys a child could fancy ; and a table, in the dining-room, loaded with everything nice to eat.

But, in the midst of all this, it struck two or three of the more practical children, that they would like some of the brass-headed nails that studded the chairs, and they set to work to pull them out. Presently, the others, who were reading or looking at shells, took a fancy to do the like ; and, in a little while, all the children nearly were spraining their fingers, in pulling out brass-headed nails. With all that they could pull out, they were not satisfied ; and then, everybody wanted some of somebody else's. And at last, the really practical and sensible ones declared, that nothing was of any real consequence, that afternoon, except to get plenty of brass-headed nails ; and that the books, and the cakes, and the microscopes, were of no use at all in themselves, but only, if they could be exchanged for nail-heads. And, at last, they began to fight for nail-heads, as the others fought for the bits of garden. Only here and there, a despised one shrank away into a corner, and tried to get a little quiet with a book, in the midst of the noise ; but all the practical ones thought of nothing else but counting nail-heads all the afternoon—even though they knew they would not be allowed to carry so much as one brass knob away with them. But no—it was—"who has most nails? I have a hundred, and you have fifty ; or, I have a thousand and you have two. I must have as many as you before I leave the house, or I cannot possibly go home in peace."

: last, they made so much noise that I awoke, and ought to myself, "what a false dream that is, of *children.*" The child is the father of the man; and ser. Children never do such foolish things. But en do.

But there is yet one last class of persons to be interrogated. The wise religious men we have looked in vain; the wise contemplative men, in in; the wise worldly men, in vain. But there is other group yet. In the midst of this vanity of rpty religion—of tragic contemplation—of wrathful d wretched ambition, and dispute for dust, there is t one great group of persons, by whom all these sputers live—the persons who have determined, or ve had it by a beneficent Providence determined : them, that they will do something useful; that whatever may be prepared for them hereafter, or ppen to them here, they will, at least, deserve the od that God gives them by winning it honourably; d that, however fallen from the purity, or far from e peace of Eden, they will carry out the duty of man dominion, though they have lost its felicity; d dress and keep the wilderness, though they no ore can dress or keep the garden.

These,—hewers of wood, and drawers of water—ese, bent under burdens, or torn of scourges—ese, that dig and weave—that plant and build; rkers in wood, and in marble, and in iron—by nom all food, clothing, habitation, furniture, and eans of delight, are produced, for themselves, and r all men beside; men, whose deeds are good,

though their words may be few ; men, whose lives are serviceable, be they never so short, and worthy of honor, be they never so humble ;—from these surely, at least, we may receive some clear message of teaching : and pierce, for an instant, into the mystery of life, and of its arts.

Yes ; from these, at last, we do receive a lesson. But I grieve to say, or rather—for that is the deeper truth of the matter—I rejoice to say—this message of theirs can only be received by joining them—not by thinking about them.

You sent for me to talk to you of art ; and I have obeyed you in coming. But, the main thing I have to tell you is,—that art must not be talked about. The fact that there is talk about it at all, signifies that it is ill done, or cannot be done. No true painter ever speaks, or ever has spoken, much of his art. The greatest speak nothing. Even Reynolds is no exception, for he wrote of all that he could not himself do, and was utterly silent respecting all that he himself did.

The moment a man can really do his work, he becomes speechless about it. All words become idle to him—all theories.

Does a bird need to theorize about building its nest, or boast of it when built. All good work is essentially done that way—without hesitation, without difficulty, without boasting ; and in the doers of the best, there is an inner and involuntary power which approximates literally to the instinct of an animal—nay, I am certain that in the most perfect

human artists, reason does not supersede instinct, but is added to an instinct as much more divine than that of the lower animals as the human body is more beautiful than theirs; that a great singer sings not with less instinct than the nightingale, but with more—only more various, applicable, and governable; that a great architect does not build with less instinct than the beaver or the bee, but with more—with an innate cunning of proportion that embraces all beauty, and a divine ingenuity of skill that improvises all construction. But be that as it may—be the instinct less or more than that of inferior animals—like or unlike theirs, still the human art is dependent on that first, and then upon an amount of practice, of science,—and of imagination disciplined by thought, which the true possessor of it knows to be incommunicable, and the true critic of it, inexplicable, except through long process of laborious years. That journey of life's conquest, in which hills over hills, and Alps on Alps arose, and sank, do you think you can make another climb it painlessly, by talking? Why you cannot even carry us up an Alp with talking. You can guide us up it, step by step, no otherwise—even so, best silently. You girls who have been among the hills know how the bad guide chatters and gesticulates, and it is “put your foot here,” and “mind how you balance yourself there;” but the good guide walks on quietly, without a word, only with his eyes on you when need is, and his arm like an iron bar, if need be. In that slow way, also, art can be taught—if you have

faith in your guide, and will let his arm be to you as an iron bar when need is. But in what teacher of art have you such faith? Certainly not in me; for, as I told you at first, I know well enough it is only because you think I can talk, not because you think I know my business, that you let me speak to you at all. If I were to tell you anything that seemed to you strange, you would not believe it, and yet it would only be in telling you strange things that I could be of use to you. I could be of great use to you—infinite use, with brief saying, if you would believe it; but you would not, just because the thing that would be of real use would go against the grain with you. You are all wild, for instance, with admiration of Gustave Dorè. Well, suppose I were to tell you, in the strongest terms I could use, that Gustave Dorè's art was bad—bad, not in weakness, not in failure, but bad with dreadful power—the power of the Furies and the Harpies mingled, enraging, and polluting; that, so long as you looked at it, no perception of pure or beautiful art was possible for you. Suppose I were to tell you that! What would be the use? Would you look at Gustave Dorè less? Rather, more, I fancy. On the other hand, I could soon put you into good humour with me, if I chose. I know well enough what you like, and how to praise it, to your better liking. I could talk to you about moonlight, and twilight, and spring flowers, and autumn leaves, and the Madonnas of Raphael—how motherly! and the Sibyls of Michael Angelo—how majestic! and the Saints of Angelico—how pious!

and the Cherubs of Correggio—how delicious ! Old as I am, I could play you a tune on the harp yet, that you would dance to. But neither you nor I should be a bit the better or wiser ; or, if we were, our increased wisdom could be of no practical effect. For, indeed, the arts, as regards teachableness, differ from the sciences also in this, that their power is founded not merely on facts which can be communicated, but on dispositions which require to be created. Art is neither to be achieved by effort of thinking, nor explained by accuracy of speaking. It is the instinctive and necessary result of powers which can only be developed through the mind of successive generations, and which finally burst into life under social conditions as slow of growth as the faculties they regulate. Whole æras of mighty history are summed, and the passions of dead myriads are concentrated, in the existence of a noble art ; and if that noble art were among us, we should feel it and rejoice, and not care to hear lectures on it ; and since it is not among us, be assured we have to go back to the root of it, or, at least, to the place where the stock of it is yet alive, and the branches began to die.

And now, may I have your pardon for pointing out, partly with reference to matters which are at this time of greater moment than the arts—that if we undertook such recession to the vital germ of national arts that have decayed, we should find a more singular arrest of their power in Ireland than in any other European country. For in the eighth

century, Ireland possessed a school of illumination, in many of its qualities—apparently in all essential qualities of invention and refinement—quite without rival; seeming as if it might have advanced to the highest triumphs in architecture and in painting. But there was one fatal flaw in its nature, by which it was stayed, and stayed with a conspicuousness of pause to which there is no parallel; so that long ago, in tracing for the students of Kensington, the progress of European schools from infancy to strength, I chose for them, in a lecture since published, two characteristic examples of early art, of equal skill; but in the one case, skill which was progressive—in the other, skill which was at pause; in the one case, it was work necessarily receptive of correction—hungry for correction—and in the other, work which inherently rejected correction. I chose for them a corrigible Eve, and an incorrigible Angel, and I grieve to say, that the incorrigible Angel was also an Irish Angel!

And the fatal difference lay wholly in this. In both pieces of art there was an equal falling short of the needs of fact; but the Lombardic Eve knew she was in the wrong, and the Irish Angel thought himself all right. The eager Lombardic sculptor, though firmly insisting on his childish idea, yet showed in the irregular broken touches of the features, and the imperfect struggle for softer lines in the form, a perception of beauty and law that he could not render; there was the strain of effort under conscious imperfection in every line. But the Irish missal painter had drawn

his angel with no sense of failure, in happy complacency, and put red dots into the palms of each hand, and rounded the eyes into perfect circles, and, I regret to say, left the mouth out altogether, with perfect satisfaction to himself.

May I, without offence, ask you to consider whether this mode of arrest in ancient Irish art may not be indicative of points of character which even yet, in some measure, arrest your national power? I have seen much of Irish character, and have watched it closely, for I have also much loved it. And I think the form of failure to which it is most liable is this, that being generous-hearted, and wholly intending always to do right, it does not attend to the external laws of right, but thinks it must necessarily do right because it means to do so, and therefore does wrong without finding it out; and then when the consequences of its wrong come upon it, or upon others connected with it, it cannot conceive that the wrong is in any wise of its causing or of its doing, but flies into wrath, and a strange agony of desire for justice, as feeling itself wholly innocent, which leads it farther astray, until there is nothing that it is not capable of doing with a good conscience.

But mind, I do not mean to say that in past or present relations between Ireland and England you have been wrong, and we right. Far from that, I believe that in all great questions of principle, and in all details of administration of law, you have been usually right and we wrong, sometimes in misunderstanding you, sometimes in resolute iniquity to you. Never-

theless, in all disputes between states, though the strongest is nearly always mainly in the wrong, the weaker is often so in a minor degree ; and I think we sometimes admit the possibility of our being in error, and you never do.

And now, returning to the broader question, what these arts and labours of life have to teach us of its mystery, this is the first of their lessons—that the more beautiful the art, the more it is essentially the work of people who feel themselves wrong—who are striving for the fulfilment of a law and the realization of a loveliness which they have not yet attained, which they feel even farther and farther from attaining, the more they strive for it. And yet, in still deeper sense, it is the work of people who know also that they are right—and that this very sense of inevitable error from their purpose marks the perfectness of that purpose, and the manifold sense of failure arises from the opening of the eyes more clearly to all the sacredest laws of truth.

This is one lesson. The second, is a very plain, and greatly precious one, namely :—that whenever the arts and labours of life are fulfilled in this spirit of striving against misrule, and doing whatever we have to do, honourably and perfectly, they invariably bring happiness, as much as seems possible to the nature of man. In all other paths, by which that happiness is pursued, there is disappointment, or destruction : for ambition and for passion there is no rest—no fruition ; the fairest pleasures of youth perish in a darkness greater than their past light ;

and the loftiest and purest love too often does but inflame the cloud of life with endless fire of pain. But, ascending from lowest to highest, through every scale of human industry, that industry worthily followed, gives peace. Ask the labourer in the field, at the forge, or in the mine ; ask the patient, delicate-fingered artizan, or the strong-armed, fiery-hearted worker in bronze, and in marble, and with the colors of light ; and none of these, who are true workmen, will ever tell you, that they have found the law of heaven an unkind one—that in the sweat of their face they should eat bread, till they return to the ground ; nor that they ever found it an unrewarded obedience, if, indeed, it was rendered faithfully to the command—“*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do—do it with thy might.*”

These are the two great and constant lessons which our labourers teach us of the mystery of life. But, there is another, and a sadder one, which they cannot teach us, which we must read on their tombstones.

“*Do it with thy might.*” There have been myriads upon myriads of human creatures who have obeyed this law—who have put every breath and nerve of their being into its toil—who have devoted every hour, and exhausted every faculty—who have bequeathed their unaccomplished thoughts at death—who being dead, have yet spoken, by majesty of memory, and strength of example. And, at last, what has all this might of humanity accomplished, in six thousand years of labour and sorrow ? What

has it *done*? Take the three chief occupations and arts of men, one by one, and count their achievements. Begin with the first—the lord of them all—agriculture. Six thousand years have passed since we were set to till the ground, from which we were taken. How much of it is tilled? How much of that which is, wisely or well? Why, in the very centre and chief garden of Europe—where the two forms of parent Christianity have had their fortresses—where the noble Catholics of the Forest Cantons, and the noble Protestants of the Vaudois valleys, have maintained, for dateless ages, their faiths and liberties—there the unchecked Alpine rivers yet run wild in devastation; and the marshes, which a few hundred men could redeem with a year's labour, still blast their helpless inhabitants into fevered idiotism. That is so, in the centre of Europe! While, on the near coast of Africa, once the Garden of the Hesperides, an Arab woman, but a few sunsets since, ate her child, for famine. And, with all the treasures of the East at our feet, we, in our own dominion, could not find a few grains of rice, for a people that asked of us no more; but stood by, and saw five hundred thousand of them perish of hunger.

Then, after agriculture, the art of kings, takes the next head of human arts—weaving, the art of queens, honoured of all noble Heathen women, in the person of their virgin goddess—honoured of all Hebrew women, by the word of their wisest king—“She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff; she stretcheth out her hand to the

poor. She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself covering of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it, and delivereth girdles to the merchant." What have we done in all these thousands of years with this bright art of Greek maid and Christian matron? Six thousand years of weaving, and have we learned to weave? Might not every naked wall have been purple with tapestry, and every feeble breast fenced with sweet colours from the cold? What have we done? Our fingers are too few, it seems, to twist together some poor covering for our bodies. We set our streams to work for us, and choke the air with fire, to turn our spinning-wheels—and, are we yet clothed? Are not the streets of the capitals of Europe foul with sale of cast clouts and rotten rags. Is not the beauty of your sweet children left in wretchedness of disgrace, while, with better honour, nature clothes the brood of the bird in its nest, and the suckling of the wolf in her den. And does not every winter's snow robe what you have not robed, and shroud what you have not shrouded; and every winter's wind bear up to heaven its wasted souls, to witness against you hereafter, by the voice of their Christ.—“I was naked, and ye clothed me not.”

Lastly—take the Art of Building—the strongest—proudest—most orderly—most enduring, of the arts of man; that, of which the produce is in the surest manner accumulative, and need not perish, or be re-

placed; but if once well done, will stand more strongly than the unbalanced rocks—more prevalently than the crumbling hills. The art which is associated with all civic pride and sacred principle; in which men record their power—satisfy their enthusiasm—make sure their defence—define and make dear their habitations. And, in six thousand years of building, what have we done? Of the greater part of all that skill and strength, *no* vestige is left, but fallen stones, that encumber the fields and impede the streams. But, from this waste of disorder, and of time, and of rage, what *is* left to us? Constructive and progressive creatures, that we are, with ruling brains, and forming hands, capable of fellowship, and thirsting for fame, can we not contend, in comfort, with the insects of the forest, or, in achievement, with the worm of the sea. The white surf rages in vain against the ramparts built by poor atoms of scarcely nascent life, but only ridges of formless ruin mark the places where once dwelt our noblest multitudes. The ant and the moth have cells for each of their young, but our little ones lie in festering heaps, in homes that consume them like graves; and night by night, from the corners of our streets, rises up the cry of the homeless—“I was a stranger, and ye took me not in.”

Must it be always thus? Is our life for ever to be without profit—without possession? Shall the strength of its generations be as barren as death; or cast away their labour, as the wild figtree casts her untimely figs? Is it all a dream then—the desire of

the eyes and the pride of life—or, if it be, might we not live in nobler dreams than these? The poets and prophets, the wise men, and the scribes, though they have told us nothing about a life to come, have told us much about the life that is now. They have dreamed—they also,—their dreams, and we have laughed at them. They have dreamed of mercy, and of justice; they have dreamed of peace and good-will; they have dreamed of labour undisappointed, and of rest undisturbed; they have dreamed of fulness in harvest, and overflowing in store; they have dreamed of wisdom in council, and of providence in law; of gladness of parents, and strength of children, and glory of grey hairs. And at these visions of theirs we have mocked, and held them for idle and vain, unreal and unaccomplishable. What have we accomplished with our realities? Is this what has come of our worldly wisdom, tried against their folly? this, our mightiest possible, against their impotent ideal? No, we have only wandered among the spectra of baser felicity, and chased phantoms of the tombs, instead of visions of the Almighty; and walked after the imaginations of our evil hearts, instead of after the counsels of Eternity, until our lives—not in the likeness of the cloud of heaven, but of the smoke of hell—have become “even as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away”?

Does it vanish then? Are you sure of that?—sure that the nothingness of the grave will be a rest from his troubled nothingness; and that the coiled shadow, which disquieteth itself in vain, cannot change

into the smoke of the torment that ascends for ever? Will any answer that they *are* sure of it, and that there is no fear, nor hope, nor desire, nor labour, whither they go? Be it so; will you not, then, make as sure of the life that now is, as you are of the death that is to come? Your hearts are wholly in this world—will you not give them to it wisely, as well as perfectly? And see, first of all, that you *have* hearts, and sound hearts, too, to give. Because you have no heaven to look for, is that any reason that you should remain ignorant of this wonderful and infinite earth, which is surely and instantly given you in possession? Although your days are numbered, and the following darkness sure, is it necessary that you should share the degradation of the brute, because you are condemned to its mortality; or live the life of the moth, and of the worm, because you are to companion with them in the dust? Not so; we may have but a few thousand of days to spend, perhaps hundreds only—perhaps, tens; nay, the longest of our time and best, looked back on, will be but as a moment, as the twinkling of an eye; but yet, we are men, not insects; we are living spirits, not passing clouds. He maketh the winds his angels; the flaming fire, his ministers. And shall we do less than these? Let us do the work of men while we bear the form of them, and as we snatch our narrow portion of time out of Eternity, snatch also our narrow but glorious inheritance of passion out of Immortality—even though our lives be as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

but there are some of you who believe not this—
 to think this cloud of life has no such close—that
 to float, revealed and illumined, upon the floor
 heaven in the day when He cometh with clouds;
 and every eye shall see Him. Some day, you believe,
 for every one of us the judgment will be set, and the books
 opened. If that be true, far more than that must
 be true. Is there but one day of judgment? Why,
 every day is a day of judgment—every day
 a Dies Iræ, and writes its irrevocable verdict
 the flame of the west. Think you that judgment
 waits till the doors of the grave are opened. It
 waits at the doors of your houses—it waits at the
 corners of your streets; we are in the midst of
 judgment—the creatures whom we crush are our
 judges—the moments we fret away are our judges—
 the elements that feed us judge as they minister—
 and the pleasures that deceive us judge as they
 delude. Let us, for our lives, do the work of Men
 while we bear the Form of them, since those lives
 are Not as a vapour, and do Not vanish away.

“The work of men”—and what is that? Well, we
 know any of us know it very quickly, on the condition
 being wholly ready to do it. But many of us are
 the most part thinking, not of what we are to do,
 but of what we are to get; and the best of us are
 like into the sin of Ananias, and it is a mortal one
 we want to keep back part of the price; and we
 continually talk of taking up our cross, as if the only
 chief in a cross was the weight of it—as if it was

only a thing to be carried, instead of to be cruc upon. "They that are His have crucified the f with the affections and lusts." Does that m think you, that in time of national distress, of gious trial, of crisis for every interest and hop humanity—none of us will cease jesting, 1 cease idling, none put themselves to any wholes work, none take so much as a tog of lace off footman's coats, to save the world? Or do rather mean, that they are ready to leave ho lands, and kindreds—yes, and life, if need be? 1 —some of us are ready enough to throw that a joyless as we have made it. But "station in I —how many of us are ready to quit that? Is i always the great objection, where there is que of finding something useful to do—"We ca leave our stations in Life"?

Now, those of us who really cannot—that say, who can only maintain themselves by contin in some business or salaried office, have al something to do; and all that they have to se is that they do it honestly and with all their n But with most people who use that apology, "rer ing in the station of life to which Providence called them," means keeping all the carriages, ar the footmen and large houses they can possibly for; and, once for all, I say that if ever Provid put them into stations of that sort—which is n all a matter of certainty—Providence is just very distinctly calling them out again. Levi's tion in life was the receipt of Custom, and Po

the shore of Galilee, and Paul's the antechambers of the High Priest, which "station in life" each had to leave with brief notice.

And, whatever our station in life may be, at this crisis, those of us who mean to fulfil our duty ought first, to live on as little as we can; and secondly, to do all the wholesome work for it we can, and to spend all we can spare in doing all the sure good we can.

And sure good is first in feeding people, then in dressing people, then in lodging people, and lastly in rightly pleasing people, with arts, or sciences, or any other subject of thought.

I say first in feeding; and, once for all, do not let yourselves be deceived by any of the common talk of indiscriminate charity. The order to us is not to feed the deserving hungry, nor the industrious hungry, nor the amiable and well-intentioned hungry, but simply to feed the hungry. It is quite true, infallibly true, that if any man will not work, neither should he eat—think of that, and every time you sit down to your dinner, ladies and gentlemen, say solemnly, before you ask a blessing, "How much work have I done to-day for my dinner"—but the proper way to enforce that order on those below you, as well as on yourselves, is not to leave vagabonds and honest people to starve together, but very distinctly to discern and seize your vagabond, and shut your vagabond up out of honest people's way, and very sternly then see that, until he has worked, he does *not* eat. But the first thing is to

be sure you have the food to give ; and, therefore, the organization of vast activities in agriculture and in commerce, for the production of the wholesomest food, and proper storing and distribution of it, so that no famine shall any more be possible among civilized beings. There is plenty of work in this business alone, and at once, for any number of people who like to engage in it.

Secondly, dressing people—that is to say, urging everyone within reach of your influence to be always neat and clean, and giving them means of being so. In so far as they absolutely refuse, you must give up the effort with respect to them, only taking care that no children within your sphere of influence shall any more be brought up with such habits, and that every person who is willing to dress with propriety shall have encouragement in doing so. And the first absolutely necessary step towards this is the gradual adoption of a consistent dress for different ranks of persons, so that their rank shall be known by their dress ; and the restriction of the changes of fashion within certain limits. All which appears for the present quite impossible ; but it is only so far as even difficult as it is difficult to conquer our vanity, frivolity, and desire to appear what we are not. And it is not, nor ever shall be, creed of mine, that these mean and shallow vices are unconquerable by Christian women.

And then, thirdly, lodging people, which you may think should have been put first, but I put it third, because we must feed and clothe people where we

find them, and lodge them afterwards. And providing lodgment for them means a great deal of vigorous legislature, and cutting down of vested interests that stand in the way, and after that, or before that, so far as we can get it, thorough sanitary and remedial action in the houses that we have ; and then the building of more, strongly and beautifully, but in groups of limited extent, kept in proportion to their streams, and walled round, so that there might be no festering and wretched suburb any where, but clean and busy street here, and the open country there, with a belt of beautiful garden and orchard round the walls, so that from any part of the city perfectly fresh air and grass, and sight of far horizon might be reachable in a few minutes' walk. This the final aim ; but in immediate action every minor and possible good to be instantly done, when and as we can ; roofs mended that have holes in them—fences that have gaps in them—walls that totter—and floors that shake ; cleanliness and order enforced with our own hands and eyes, till we are breathless, every day. And all the fine arts will healthily follow. I myself have washed a flight of stone stairs all down, with bucket and broom, in a Savoy inn, where they hadn't washed their stairs since they first went up them, and I never made a better sketch than that afternoon.

These, then, are the three needs of civilized life ; and the law for every Christian man and woman is, that they shall be in direct service towards one of these three needs, as far as is consistent with their own special occupation, and if they have no special

business, then wholly in one of these services. And out of such exertion in plain duty all other good will come; for in this direct contention with material evil, you will find out the real nature of all evil; you will discern by the various kinds of resistance, what is really the fault and main antagonism to good; also you will find the most unexpected helps and profound lessons given, and truths will come thus down to us which the speculation of all our lives would never have raised us up to. You will find nearly every educational problem solved, as soon as you truly want to do something; every body will become of use in their own fittest way, and will learn what is best for them to know in that use. Competitive examination will then, and not till then, be wholesome, because it will be daily, and calm, and in practice; and on these familiar arts, and minute, but certain and serviceable, knowledges, will be surely edified and sustained, the greater arts and splendid theoretical sciences.

But much more than this. On such holy and simple practice will be founded, indeed, at last, an infallible religion. The greatest of all the mysteries of life and the most terrible, is the corruption of even the sincerest religion, which is not daily founded on rational, effective, humble, and helpful action. Helpful action, observe! for there is just one law, which obeyed, keeps all religions pure—forgotten, makes them all false. Whenever in any religious faith, dark or bright, we allow our minds to dwell upon the points in which we differ from other people, we are wrong, and

in the devil's power. That is the essence of the Pharisee's thanksgiving—"Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." At every moment of our lives we should be trying to find out, not in what we differ with other people, but in what we agree with them; and the moment we find we can agree as to anything that should be done, kind or good, (and who but fools couldn't?) then do it; push at it together; you can't quarrel in a side-by-side push; but the moment that even the best men stop pushing, and begin talking, they mistake their pugnacity for piety, and it's all over. I will not speak of the crimes which in past times have been committed in the name of Christ, nor of the follies which are at this hour held to be consistent with obedience to Him; but I will speak of the morbid corruption and waste of vital power in religious sentiment, by which the pure strength of that which should be the guiding soul of every nation, the splendour of its youthful manhood, and spotless light of its maidenhood, is averted or cast away. You may see continually girls who have never been taught to do a single useful thing thoroughly; who cannot sew, who cannot cook, who cannot cast an account, nor prepare a medicine, whose whole life has been passed either in play or in pride; you will find girls like these, when they are earnest-hearted, cast all their innate passion of religious spirit, which was meant by God to support them through the irksomeness of daily toil, into grievous and vain meditation over the meaning of the great Book, of which no syllable was

ever yet to be understood but through a deed ; all the instinctive wisdom and mercy of their womanhood made vain, and the glory of their pure consciences warped into fruitless agony concerning questions which the laws of common serviceable life would have either solved for them in an instant, or kept out of their way. Give such a girl any true work that will make her active in the dawn, and weary at night, with the consciousness that her fellow-creatures have indeed been the better for her day, and the powerless sorrow of her enthusiasm will transform itself into a majesty of radiant and beneficent peace.

So with our youths. We once taught them to make Latin verses, and called them educated ; now we teach them to leap and to row, to hit a ball with a bat, and call them educated. Can they plough, can they sow, can they plant at the right time, or build with a steady hand ? Is it the effort of their lives to be chaste, knightly, faithful, holy in thought, lovely in word and deed ? Indeed it is, with some, nay with many, and the strength of England is in them, and the hope ; but we have to turn their courage from the toil of war to the toil of mercy ; and their intellect from dispute of words to discernment of things ; and their knighthood from the errantry of adventure to the state and fidelity of a kingly power. And then, indeed, shall abide for them and for us an incorruptible felicity, and an infallible religion ; shall abide for us Faith, no more to be assailed by temptation, no more to be defended by wrath and by fear ;—shall abide with us Hope, no more to be

quenched by the years that overwhelm, or made ashamed by the shadows that betray ;—shall abide for us, and with us, the greatest of these—the abiding will—the abiding name of our Father—for the greatest of these is Charity.





MR. TENNYSON AND MR. BROWNING.

BY

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MR. TENNYSON

AND

MR. BROWNING.



AMONG the Literary Portraits of M. Sainte-Beuve are two placed side by side, and distinguished by more than a common care of that writer's—should we not say, that *artist's*—purity of colour and graceful animation of outline. The portraits are those of Mathurin Regnier and André Chénier. They are brought together, not to suggest a series of skilful antitheses, not to form the subject of a parallel of the academic species, but because the comparison rests on an essentially logical basis, the two poets being admirable types of two poetical spirits or systems of thought and feeling, the one of which, as soon as it is thoroughly possessed, requires the other and forms its complement.

For a similar reason, two names might be brought together, which, in a superficial or vulgar way, appear often, and almost inevitably, side by side at the present day—the names of Mr. Tennyson and Mr. Browning. As Regnier and Chénier stood over one against the other, the types of two poetical spirits,

so, in some important respects, do our own contemporary poets. Each represents a class of character which is the counterpart of the other. Each reminds us of truths, which, if we listened to the other alone, we should be not unlikely to forget.

Criticism commonly occupies itself, when surveying the works of any particular artist, either with a study of his peculiar powers, instincts, and aptitudes; or a study of the subjects, towards which, by blind attraction or deliberate choice, he turns; or a study of that fine effluence of the whole artistic nature which can hardly be analysed, and which we call *style*. The method which M. Sainte-Beuve pursues in his essay on Mathurin Regnier, and André Chénier is different:—"Taking successively the four or five great elementary themes of all poetry—God, nature, genius, art, love, human life—let us see how they revealed themselves to the two men we are now studying, and under what aspects they endeavoured to re-produce them." Such is the method pursued in the essay by M. Sainte-Beuve, and it enables one to surprise and lay hold of some characteristics of an artist which escape the other methods. In applying it, however, as I propose to do, it is well to begin with an explanation.

We are about to study a portion of what may be termed the *philosophy* of a poet; we are about to consider him as a thinker; but let it be observed, as a thinker, who is in the first place an artist. Now the conclusions of all men on those subjects which chiefly occupy the artist—on God and nature, and

our relations to them—on human character and life; and the struggle of will and circumstances, are the result of much besides pure logic. The very materials of thought which this or that man possesses on such subjects, are dependent, in a great degree, on his moral temperament and emotional tendencies. And the processes also by which those materials are dealt with, and shaped, and turned out by the intellect, depend hardly less on the character of the individual, and his habitual trains of feeling. This holds good for every man. Prove to me by one hundred syllogisms that there is a human duty called reverence, co-ordinate with a duty which directs me to reform what is established ; if my nature is of a passionate ardent kind, the conclusion of your syllogisms will grow dim and fade out my consciousness; the reforming impulse will again and again break over until it quite submerges the conservative principle. It is true of every man that his nature is a living organism, each function of which is affected by all the others ; our very physical sensibility may be suspended by an intense act of thought or passionate feeling. But this is true in a special degree of the artist. An idea which obscurely rests upon an emotion, has as secure a place in his nature as any thought which in the mind of another man is elaborated in the understanding. And from every thought in him springs readily an emotion. He works at his best, as Novalis has said, only when “he can put all his powers into a reciprocally quickening activity, and hold them therein.” If, therefore, I speak of Mr. Browning

or Mr. Tennyson as a thinker, let it be remembered, that it is as a sensitive, imaginative, emotional thinker.

Let us start in our study—a very partial study—with what may be an assumption for the present, but an assumption which will lead to its own verification. Let us start by saying that Mr. Tennyson has a strong feeling for the dignity and efficiency of *law*—of *law* understood in its widest sense. “All things that are have some operation, not violent nor casual; nor doth anything ever begin to exercise the same without some fore-conceived end for which it worketh. And the end which it worketh for is not obtained unless the work be also fit to obtain it by; for unto every end, every operation will not serve. That which doth assign unto each the kind—that which doth moderate the force and power—that which doth appoint the form and measure of working, the same we term ‘Law.’” I quote the definition of Hooker, because, though Mr. Tennyson has imbibed the modern spirit in a large degree, and that with reference to external nature, and the scientific method of approaching it, the heart and imagination of the poet will not permit him to consider a law of nature as simply a generalized expression of facts; he continues to regard it as an invisible *power* controlling and guiding the operations of things.

Under what aspect is the relation of the world and of man to God represented in the poems of Mr. Tennyson? Surely, one who feels so strongly the presence of law in the physical world, and who recognizes so fully the struggle in the moral nature of

man between impulse and duty, assigning to conscience a supreme place, has the best materials for a vivid feeling of the personal relation of God to His creatures? I do not believe so. It is quite possible to admit in one's thoughts and feelings the existence of a physical order of the material world, and a moral order of the spiritual world, and yet to enter slightly into those intimate relations of the affections with a Divine Being, which reveal Him in the tenderest way—as a Father, as a highest Friend. Fichte, the sublime idealist, was withheld from seeing God by no obtruding veil of a material universe. Fichte, if any man ever did, recognized the moral order of the world. But Fichte annihilated his own personality and that of God in the infinity of this moral order. No: it is not *law* but *will* that reveals will; it is not our strength but our weakness which discovers the invisible Helper and Friend; it is not our sufficiencies but our needs; it is the desire of self-surrender, the grief which makes desolate, the solitary rapture which requires a sharer in its excess, the high delight which must save itself from as deep dejection by a transition into gratitude.

Accordingly, although we find the idea of God entering largely into the poems of Mr. Tennyson, there is not much recognition of what is called—perhaps unfortunately called—His personal character. There is a tendency to rest in the orderly manifestation of God, as the supreme Law-giver, and even to identify Him (for the feelings though it may not be for the intellect) with His presentation of Himself

in the physical and moral order of the universe. And if this precludes all religious or spiritual ecstasy, such as the belief in a sudden and special approach of God is likely to occasion, it preserves the mind from despair or any profound dejection; unless, indeed, the faith in this order itself gives way, when in the universal chaos, no will capable of bringing restoration being present, a confusion of mind wilder than any other must appear. Mr. Tennyson has represented the feminine and masculine religious spirit (with purity for its central moral quality) in two pieces placed side by side in his collected poems—*St. Agnes' Eve*, and *Sir Galahad*; and he has represented them with remarkable truth and ability. But I cannot remember any approach to that rapture of mind which the advent of God produces, among Mr. Tennyson's personal confessions, (naturally as we might expect there to find such a mood of mind,) unless it be one, and that one is an imagined possibility in the passionate parting of two loving souls (a parting full of the joy and grief and glory of self-abandonment) should the personalities of all men be finally remerged in the Supreme Being.

[Love] seeks at least
" Upon the last and sharpest height,
 Before the spirits fade away,
 Some landing-place to clasp and say,
 ' Farewell! We lose ourselves in light.' "

On the other hand, as has been said, Mr. Tennyson's sense of a beneficent order of the world lifts him through and over the common dejections of man.

e will not mourn for any over-much, although the
ne which he predicted to his friend is quenched
an early death :—

“ The fame is quench'd that I foresaw,
The head hath miss'd an earthly wreath ;
I curse not nature, no, nor death ;
For nothing is that errs from law.”

ven the thought of the foul corruption of the grave
not insupportable :—

“ I wage not any feud with Death
For changes wrought on form or face ;
No lower life that earth's embrace
May breed in him, can fright my faith.
Eternal process moving on,
From state to state the spirit walks ;
And these are but the shatter'd stalks,
Or ruin'd chrysalis of one.”

It is only when the doubt of a beneficent order of
the world cannot be put away—it is only when (on
the suggestion of some facts of geology) nature, “ red
in tooth and claw with ravine,” seems ruthless alike
to the individual and the species—that the voice of
the mourner grows wild, and it appears to him that
his grief has lost its sanctity, and wrongs the quiet
of the dead.*

Mr. Tennyson finds law present throughout all
nature, but there is no part of nature in which he
dwells with so much satisfaction upon its presence
as in human society. No one so largely as Mr.
Tennyson has represented in art the new thoughts

* In Memoriam, lx. lxi.

and feelings which form the impassioned side of the modern doctrine of progress. Mr. Tennyson is for ever haunted by "the vision of the world, and all the wonder that will be." But let it be observed, his hopes and aspirations are not those of the Radical or Movement character. He is in all his poems a Conservative—though a liberal one. Let me illustrate the feeling of Shelley in contrast with that of Mr. Tennyson with reference to this idea of progress. In the year 1819 Shelley believed that England had reached almost as low a point of degradation as was possible :—

" An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king,—
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn—mud from a muddy spring,—
Rulers, who neither see, nor feel, nor know,
But leech-like to their fainting country cling,
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow,—
A people starved and stabb'd in the untill'd field,—
An army which liberticide and prey
Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield,
Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay,—
Religion Christless, Godless,—a book seal'd ;
A Senate—Time's worst statute unrepeal'd."

This was what Shelley found in England forty-nine years ago. Yet did he despair? No : all these things

" Are graves, from which a glorious Phantom may
Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day."

Shelley was inspired with an ardour for reform, which accounts for some extravagances of his own life, and which appears as a ruling passion in many of the

matris personæ of his poems—in Lionel, in Lyon, Cynthia, and others. But how did Shelley dream at the regeneration of human society would come? arising forth like a glorious phantom—as the result of some bright, brief, national struggle; as the consequence of the apparition of some pure spirit, at once a poet and a prophet, before whose voice huge tyrannies and cruel hypocrisies would go down as piled-up clouds go down ruined and rent before a swift, pure wind; in some way or other which involved a catastrophe, not according to the ordinary laws of nature.

Now Mr. Tennyson's doctrine of progress, which has absorbed from the moral and intellectual atmosphere surrounding him, is widely different. No idea, perhaps, occupies so large a place in his poems as that of the progress of the race. This it is which binds together the beginning, middle, and end of *Locksley Hall*. This it is which suggests the allegory for the random fantasies of the "Day-Dream." This it is which supplies the tempted with a weapon of defence, and the tempter with a deadlier weapon of attack in "The Two Voices." This it is of which Coleridge writes, and at which old James girds in "The Golden Year." This it is which gives a broad basis of meditative thought to the "Morte d' Arthur," and makes it more than a glorious fable. This it is which is the sweetness of "The Poet's Song," that made the wild swan pause, and the lark drop suddenly to earth. This it is which forms the closing prophecy of "The Princess," and the full declaration

of the poet's faith. This it is which is heard in the final chords of "In Memoriam," changing the music from a minor to a major key. And the same doctrine is preached from the opposite side in the "Vision of Sin," in which the central vice of the base or sensual heart is represented as hopelessness with reference to the progress of human society:—

" Fill the can and fill the cup ;
All the windy ways of men
Are but dust that rises up,
And is lightly laid again."*

But in all these poems throughout which the idea of progress is so variously developed, and brought into relation with moods of mind so various, the progress of mankind is uniformly represented as the evolution and self-realization of a law—it is represented as taking place gradually and slowly, and its consummation is placed in a remote future. We "hear the roll of the ages." The "increasing purpose" runs through centuries; it is "with the process of the suns" that the thoughts of men are widened. It is when we should have slept through many decades and quinquenniads that we might wake to reap "the flower and quintessence of change."

" For we are Ancients of the Earth,
And in the morning of the times."

It is because millenniums will not bring the advance

* The same form of unbelief obtains a similar expression in "In Memoriam;" the utmost of despair being indicated by the appearance of Time, not as a builder of solid structures, but as a maniac scattering dust. In Mem. xlix.

of knowledge near its term, that the tempted soul in "The Two Voices" feels it a paltry thing to watch the spread of intellectual light for the poor thirty or forty years of a lifetime. It is "in long years" that man and woman shall grow to the full-grown man and woman, till at last they

" Upon the skirts of Time
Sit side by side, full-summ'd in all their powers.
* * * * *
Then comes the statelier Eden back to men :
Then reign the world's great bridals, chaste and calm :
Then springs the crowning race of humankind."

And if this crowning race found a type in the lost friend of the "In Memoriam," it was a type which appeared before the times were prepared for such men, so that God took him to Himself—

" That God which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves."

Apart from the growth of the individual, this golden age to which the poet looks forward, the coming of which he sees shine far-off, is characterized in his imagination chiefly by a great development of knowledge—especially of scientific knowledge ; this first ; and, secondly, by the universal presence of political order and freedom, national and international, secured by a vast and glorious federation. It is quite in harmony with Mr. Tennyson's feeling for law that he should be much impressed by the successes of

science, and that its promises should flatter his imagination. The "crowning race" is a race

"Of those that, eye to eye, shall look
On knowledge; under whose command
Is Earth and Earth's, and in their hand
Is Nature like an open book."

If we were to sleep the hundred years, and wake, our joy would be to

"Wake on science grown to more,
On secrets of the brain, the stars."

It is the promises and results of science which restore to sanity the speaker in "Locksley Hall," and in "The Princess" the sport, half-science of galvanic batteries, model steam-engines, clock-work steamers, and fire-balloons, fills the writer with a faith that

"This fine old world of ours is but a child
Yet in the go-cart. Patience! Give it time
To learn its limbs: there is a hand that guides."

But Mr. Tennyson's dream of the future is not more haunted by recurring images of scientific discoveries and revelations, than by the phantoms of great political organizations. That will be a time

"When the war-drum throbs no longer, and the battle flags
are furl'd,
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world."

A time in which

"Phantoms of other forms of rule,
New Majesties of mighty States"

will appear, become actual at least ; a time in which the years will reveal

“ The vast Republics that may grow
The Federations and the Powers ;
Titanic forces taking birth.”

But these things are very far off ; and this belief, and the faith that the progress of mankind is governed by a slowly self-revealing law, has in one respect a repressive influence on our hopes and our endeavours. He who is possessed by this faith will expect no speedy regeneration of mankind political or social, and will have little sympathy with those enthusiastic hearts whose hopes are founded on their desires, and are therefore infinite. But it is the characteristic of intense passion in many natures not to calculate. “ Anger, for example, does not ask for satisfaction in gold or silver ; it feels and resents a wrong that is infinite. Love demands the eternal blessedness of the thing loved—it feels, and delights to feel, that it is itself infinite, and can never end ;” and so these passions of ours are, as Frederick Robertson has finely said, “ outlaws of time and space,” uncalculating, disdaining the bounds of the world. And thus the political passion in many, and those some of the noblest natures, is blind to consequences, scorns the limitations of circumstances, and impels to action, even when to the calculating spirit action must appear as inevitable failure. Whether are our successes or our failures, I wonder, the nobler things in life ?

Now, from sympathy with these forms of emotion

and action, Mr. Tennyson is precluded. Mr. Tennyson's usual justness of mind forsakes him, whenever he has to speak of political movements into which passion in its uncalculating forms entered as a main motive power. Yet passion of this kind is the right and appropriate power for effecting many things. Mr. Tennyson is not free from an insular self-commendation at the expense of nations, which are animated by a different spirit from our own, not one less noble. It could only be by doing violence to all his instinctive tendencies that Mr. Tennyson could arrive at the truth about so simply heroic a man as Garibaldi. "Yonder," he says (in France)

" Whiff ! there comes a sudden heat ;
The gravest citizen seems to lose his head,
The king is scared, the soldier will not fight,
The little boys begin to shoot and stab,"

and so on.

Now, I say, that satire is vulgar, because it indicates a deficiency of sympathy, a want of intelligence, and a provincial spirit of admiring and disliking things as they resemble or differ from our ourselves. Mr. Tennyson's appreciation of the strong points of the English character is true and noble ; only, a larger mind would sympathize with every honourable form in which the political passion gives itself expression. Mr. Tennyson's ideal for every country is England, and that is a blunder in politics :—

" A land of settled government,
A land of just and old renown,

Where Freedom slowly broadens down
From precedent to precedent."

That is an excellent verse; but it is nobler to make **han** to follow precedents, and great emotions and **passionate** thought soon create a history and **tradition** of precedents in the lives of both individuals **and** nations. Mr. Tennyson loves freedom, but it **must** be

"That sober freedom, out of which there springs
Our loyal passion for our temperate kings."

[t is a love

"Of freedom in her royal seat
Of England, not the schoolboy heat—
The blind hysterics of the Celt."

He has no sympathy with hearts that love "not wisely but too well":—

"Love thou thy land with love far brought
From out the storied Past, and used
Within the Present, but transferred
Thro' future time by power of thought."

What Mr. Tennyson has written will always be true for men of a certain character; and to follow such counsel as his will lead them to their highest possible development. But for men of a different character it will be always false and futile. He has never found out those truths which are so happily put by Vauvenargues—"Reason deceives us more often than does nature." "If passion advises more boldly than reflection, it is because passion gives greater power

to carry out its advice." "To do great things, one must live as if one could never die."

Mr. Tennyson's political doctrine is in perfect harmony with his ideal of human character. As the ideal nation is one in which the highest wisdom is united with perfect self-government, so the ideal man is he whose life is led to sovereign power by self-knowledge resulting in self-control, and self-control growing perfect in self-reverence. Mr. Tennyson would have the umpire give the golden fruit to neither Here nor Aphrodite, but to Pallas, that we may

" Live by law,
Acting the law we live by without fear."

Self-reverence, self-control, self-knowledge, these are the supreme elements of character in Mr. Tennyson's type of manhood. What is the central point in the ethical purport of the "Idylls of the King"? It is to lead the reader to recognise in such natures as the king's the ideal of human nature. And what is Arthur? The "blameless" monarch who "reverenced his conscience as a king," throughout the most passionate scene of the poems "sublime in self-repression."—

" I wanted warmth and colour, which I found
In Lancelot,—now I see thee what thou art,
Thou art the highest, and most human too,
Not Lancelot, not another."

Mr. Tennyson has had occasion to write two remarkable poetical *éloges*—one on the late Prince Consort, the other on the late Duke of Wellington. In both,

the characters are drawn with fine discrimination, but in both, the crowning virtue of the dead was their obedience and self-subjugation to the law of duty.* In both the lesson taught is, that he who toils along the upward path of painful right-doing

“ Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled
Are close upon the shining table-lands
To which our God Himself is moon and sun.”

And may we not sum up the substance of Mr. Tennyson's personal confessions in “In Memoriam” by saying, that they are the account of the growth, through sorrow, of the firmer mind which counts it crime

“ To mourn for any overmuch ;”

which “turns its burden into gain,” and for which those truths which never can be proved, and which were lost in the first wild shock of grief, are regained by “faith that comes of self-control.”

We now turn to a consideration of the works of Mr. Browning, while we still stand at the same point of view. As we started with the assumption that Mr. Tennyson has a strong feeling for the dignity and efficiency of Law, let us assume, for the present, that Mr. Browning has a strong feeling for the nobility of passions and enthusiasms, and a comparatively feeble feeling for Law and its results.

As a consequence of this, (if the assumption be

* I exhort the reader to compare the fine poem of Mr. W. Bell Scott, of which the Duke of Wellington is the subject. It is not an *éloge*, but a criticism.

valid,) we should expect that his view of external nature would be remarkably different from that of Mr. Tennyson. And so it is. It is not the *order* and regularity of the processes of the natural world which impress the imagination of Mr. Browning, but the streaming forth of power and will and love in all the face of nature. The stale and unprofitable charge of "Pantheism" has been made against the poems of Mr. Tennyson, and recently against those of Mr. Browning. I shall not lose a moment by making a barren reply to a barren accusation. But if Mr. Tennyson's thinking had any tendency in the direction called "Pantheistic," it would be to identify God with the order and wisdom of the universe; if Mr. Browning's thinking had such a tendency, it would be to identify Him with the passion (if we may so speak) of nature.

The earth lies dormant all the winter,

" But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes
 Over its breast, to waken it ; rare verdure
 Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between
 The withered tree-roots and the cracks of frost,
 Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face ;
 The grass grows bright, the boughs are swoln with blooms
 Like chrysalids impatient for the air,
 The shining dorrs are busy, beetles run
 Along the furrows, ants make their ado ;
 Above, birds fly in merry flocks, the lark
 Soars up and up, shivering for very joy ;
 Afar the ocean sleeps ; white fishing-gulls
 Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe
 Of nested limpets ; savage creatures seek

Their loves in wood and plain—and God renews
His ancient rapture ! Thus He dwells in all,
From life's minute beginnings, up at last
To man—the consummation of this scheme
Of being, the completion of this sphere
Of life.”*

Let Mr. Browning is, perhaps more than any modern poet, the reverse of what is called a “Panthéist”—a word for which nobody seems to know a meaning. He recognises everywhere in God the elements of personality, in the only sense in which that term can be applied to God ; he recognises everywhere God's will and consciousness and character. A law of nature means nothing to Mr. Browning if it does not mean the immanence of power and will and love. His own feeling with regard to the relation of God to His universe is not identical with that of the nations of the East, where God is so near

“ He glows above
With scarce an intervention, presses close
And palpitatingly, His soul o'er ours.”

Mr. Browning's own feeling is more complex than what is expressed in this passage, which he has put into the mouth of the noblest of the persons in his dramas—the Moorish commander, Luria ; but he can pass with perfect sympathy into this state of feeling, and his higher trances and mountings of the mind closely resemble it. The world is not moved by blind forces apart from an intelligent will ; where-

* Paracelsus, Works, 3rd ed. vol. iii. pp. 144, 145

ever force is present there is the will of God, and there, too, is the love of God. To this effect argues the apostle John in "A Death in the Desert," with the deep prevision of a dying man anticipating the doubts and questionings of modern days. And in the third of those remarkable poems which form the epilogue of the "Dramatis Personæ," the whole world rises in the imagination of the speaker into one vast spiritual temple, in which voices of singers and the swell of trumpets and the cries of the priests are heard going up to God no less truly than in the old Jewish worship, while the face of Christ, full of divine will and love, becomes apparent, as that of which all nature is a shadow and a type.

Mr. Browning, like Mr. Tennyson, is a believer in the doctrine of progress, though it enters comparatively in a slight degree into his poems. The important points, however, to observe are—first, that while Mr. Tennyson considers the chief instruments of human progress to be a vast increase of knowledge and of political organization, Mr. Browning makes that progress dependent on the production of higher passions and aspirations—hopes and joys and sorrows; and secondly, that while Mr. Tennyson finds the evidence of the truth of the doctrine of progress in the universal presence of law, Mr. Browning obtains his assurance of its truth from the anticipations, types, and symbols of a higher greatness in store for man, which even now reside in his nature—his nature, which is ever unsatisfied, ever yearning upward in thought, feeling, and endeavour.

“ In man’s self arise

August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendour ever on before
In that eternal circle run by life.
For men begin to pass their nature’s bound,
And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant
Their proper joys and griefs; they outgrow all
The narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade
Before the unmeasured thirst for good : while peace
Rises within them ever more and more.”

—Paracelsus, p. 148.

But Mr. Browning thinks much less of the future of the human race and of a terrestrial golden age, and of the life and destiny of the individual, and of the heaven that each may attain; and it is in his doctrine of the growth of the individual, and its most appropriate means, that we find the peculiar part of Mr. Browning’s philosophy. We have seen that in Mr. Tennyson’s ideal of manhood, obedience to the law of conscience, absolute submission to the dictates of duty, blamelessness, (“wearing the white flower of blameless life,”) self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control, these are the main elements of character and action. And the chief instruments in the development of the individual, according to this view, are those periods or occasions of life—protracted, it may be, through long years of patient endurance, or laborious toil, or it may be coming in the sudden crises of events, which put the soul upon its trial—those occasions of life, whatever they are, which afford opportunities to conscience of laying its mandate on the heart, opportunities of subduing the pas-

sions, and of exercising the power of self-control. Now, the first principle of Mr. Browning's philosophy of life precludes this ideal; for it seems to him that the greatness and glory of man lie not in submission, but in aspiration; not in self-repression, but in the passions which scorn the limitations of time and space, and in the bright endeavours towards results that are unattainable on earth. It is the tendencies which manifest themselves in this belief that make Mr. Browning an enthusiastic admirer of Shelley. Of Shelley he has written in the eloquent prose of the preface to the forged letters which we once supposed to be by Shelley. When he looks upon one who has seen Shelley with his bodily eye he is lost in a trance of wonder and awe, in which the man appears glorified before him:—

“ Ah ! did you once see Shelley plain,
 And did he stop and speak to you ?
 And did you speak to him again ?
 How strange it seems and new !
 But you were living before that,
 And you are living after,
 And the memory I started at—
 My starting moves your laughter !”

And it is when the pure spirit of Shelley presents itself amongst the spectral auditory who listen to the story of Sordello, that the poet ceases to speak, unable to utter a word:—

“ The thunder-phrase of the Athenian, grown
 Up out of memories of Marathon,
 Would echo like his own sword's grinding screech
 Braying a Persian shield,—the silver speech

Of Sidney's self, the starry paladin,
 Turn intense as a trumpet sounding in
 The knights to tilt,—wert thou to hear !”

If I were asked—What is the central and controlling idea in Mr. Browning's system of thought? I would let it be remembered when I speak of an ideal—a system of thought, that the content of an ideal system in the mind of an artist can commonly be regarded as being absorbed into his emotional nature from whence it is generated) my answer would be this—That man here on earth, in a state of preparation for other lives, is surrounded by wondrous spiritual influences, is made great for the sphere that contains him, while, at the same time, he can exist only by submitting for the present to the conditions it imposes, never with- out the possibility of a fatal loss becoming content with such submission, regarding those conditions as final. Our nature is unfinished, imperfect, but its glory, its peculiarity, that which makes us men—not God and not the stones—lies in this very character of imperfection, in its wide scope, as it does, for indefinite growth and progress :—

“ Progress, man's distinctive mark alone,
 Not God's and not the beasts' ; God is, they are,
 Man partly is, and wholly hopes to be.”

And it is by a succession of failures, stimulating her aspirations and endeavours, that we may reach at last

“ The ultimate angels' law
 Indulging every instinct of the soul,
 There where law, life, joy, impulse, are one thing !”*

* Dramatis Personæ—A Death in the Desert, p. 116.

One of two lives must be chosen by each of us—a worldly or a spiritual life. The former begins and ends in limited joys and griefs, hopes and fears—it is conditioned by time and space—it does not reveal God, but rather conceals Him ; it need not be sensual or devilish, but it is earthly. Success in it is possible here below, and even a high success when material, intellectual, and æsthetical pleasures are organised for the delight of a prudent man, who will enjoy them temperately. The spiritual life, on the contrary, begins and ends in hopes and fears, in joys and sorrows, which in their very nature are infinite ; for it time and space have no existence ; it lives in God, it is heavenly and divine ; but on earth it may seem no better than a succession of failures—failures, however, which are in truth the highest glory of a human being.

Now a man may commit either of two ir retrievable errors : he may renounce (through temptations of sense, or other causes, but most frequently through supineness of heart, or brain, or hand, or else through prudential motives,) his spiritual, his infinite life, and its concerns. That is one error. Or he may try to force those concerns and corresponding states of thought, and feeling, and endeavour into the material life—the life of humiliation and of inadequate resources. He may deny his higher nature, which is ever yearning upward to God through all noble forms of human thought, emotion, and action ; he may weary of failure, which (as generating a higher tendency) is his glory ; or else he may deny the con-

ditions of existence, and endeavour to realize in this life what is work for eternity.

It is not then obedience, it is not even obedience to the law of duty, which leads us to our true life, but rather infinite desire, and endless aspiration. Mr. Browning's ideal of manhood in this life always includes the fact that it is the ideal of a creature whose development can never be perfect on earth—always includes the fact that there is a hereafter for each individual soul when the earth shall have passed away. Consider two extremes then which are both destructive to our nature, and thence learn the true position and the true life of a man. To deny heaven and the infinite life—that is one extreme. To deny earth and the finite life—that is the other extreme. If we are content with the limited and perishable joys, and gifts, and faculties of the world, we shall never see God,

“Nor all that chivalry of His,
The soldier-saints, who, row on row,
Burn upward each to his point of bliss—
Since, the end of life being manifest,
He had burned his way thro' the world to this.”

If, on the contrary, we aim at accomplishing under all the restrictions of this life the work of eternity—if we desire absolute knowledge or none at all, infinite love, or no love, a boundless exercise of our will, the manifestation of our total power, or no exercise of our will, then we shall either destroy ourselves, dash ourselves to pieces against the walls of time and space, or else seeing that our objects are unattainable, sink into a state of hopeless enerva-

tion. But between these two extremes lies a middle course, and in it will be found the true life of man. He must not rest content with earth and the gifts of earth; he must not aim at "thrusting in time eternity's concern;" but he must perpetually grasp at things which are just within or almost without his reach, and having attained them find that they are unsatisfying, so that by an endless series of aspirations, and endeavours which generate new aspirations and new endeavours, he may be sent on to God, and Christ, and Heaven.

These ideas lead us to the central point from which we can perceive the peculiarity and origin of Mr. Browning's feeling with regard to nature, art, religion, love, beauty, knowledge: around them we observe, as we read through his works, one poem after another falling into position, each bringing in addition something of its own.

Is it of external nature that Mr. Browning speaks? The preciousness of external nature lies in its being the manifest power and love of God to which our heart springs as fire. In that *Easter Dream* of the last judgment, what is the doom of God upon the condemned soul? It is to take all that the soul desires, and since the soul of the lost man loved the world—the world with its beauty, and wonder, and delight—but never yearned upward to God who dwelt in them, the decree is pronounced,

"Thou art shut
Out of the heaven of spirit; glut
Thy sense upon the world."

And no condemnation could have been more awful, for nature has betrayed and ruined us if we rest in it; betrayed and ruined us, unless it sends us onward unsatisfied to God.

And what are Mr. Browning's chief doctrines on the subject of art? No poet probably has so fully interpreted the artistic spirit as it finds expression in poetry (Aprile); sculpture (Jules); painting (Andrea del Sarto, Fra Lippo Lippi, Pictor Ignotus); and Music (Abt Vogler, A toccata of Galuppi, Hugues of Saxe Gotha); and as we found it quite in harmony with Mr. Tennyson's feeling for law, that his imagination should be impressed by the processes and results of science, so it is quite in harmony with Mr. Browning's feeling for enthusiasms and passions that he should enter profoundly into the nature of art, and the kind of genius which it requires. Now, Mr. Browning brings out his doctrines on art, perhaps unconsciously, by the remarkable contrast between those poems which represent the spirit of the artist and the spirit of the connoisseur. No one has so profoundly exposed the worldliness of the connoisseur, or virtuoso, who, feeling none of the unsatisfied aspirations of the artist, rests in the visible products of art, and looks for nothing beyond them. "The bishop orders his tomb at St. Praxed's," and "My Last Duchess," and "Monsignor" in "Pippa Passes," will be remembered by every reader of Mr. Browning.

The unbelieving and worldly spirit of the dying bishop, his sense of the vanity of the world simply

because the world is passing out of his reach, the regretful memory of the pleasures of his youth, the envious spite towards Gandolf, who robbed him of the best position in St. Praxed's for a tomb, and the dread lest his reputed sons should fail to carry out his designs, are united with a perfect appreciation of Renaissance art, and a luxurious satisfaction, even on a death-bed, in the splendour of voluptuous form and colour. There is a profound sadness in the poem. The true glory of art is, that in its creation there exist desires and aspirations which can never be satisfied on earth, but which generate new desires and new aspirations, by which the spirit mounts to God Himself. The artist (Mr. Browning loves to insist on this point) who can realize in marble, or colour, or music, his ideal, has missed the true gain of art. In "Pippa Passes," the regeneration of Jules the sculptor's art turns on his finding out that in the very perfection he had attained lies ultimate failure. And one entire poem—"Andrea del Sarto"—has been devoted to the development of this idea. Andrea is "the faultless painter;" no line of his drawing ever goes astray; he can express perfectly all that is in his mind; but for this very reason, precisely because he is "the faultless painter," his art is deficient of the highest qualities of art. A man's aim in art should be higher than anything he can possibly effect—

" A man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a Heaven for? all is silver-gray,
Placid and perfect with my art—the worse."

And he recognises his superior in Raphael, whose execution falls far below his own.

“Yonder’s a work, now, of that famous youth,
The Urbinate who died five years ago.
(’Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching that Heaven might so replenish him,
Above and thro’ his art—for it gives way;
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
A fault to pardon in the drawing’s lines,
Its body so to speak : its soul is right,
He means right—that a child may understand.
Still, what an arm ! and I could alter it.
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
Out of me ! out of me !”

The true artist is ever sent through and beyond his art unsatisfied to God. Tears start into the eyes of **Abt. Vogler**, who has been extemporizing on his musical instrument, because now in the silence he feels the beauty of that palace of music which he reared, and which is gone never to be recalled. There is in the silence a sense of loss, vacancy and failure, but the failure generates a higher aspiration, and the musician reaches upward to God.

“Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable Name ?
Builder and maker Thou of houses not made with hands !
What, have fear of change from Thee who art ever the same ?
Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands ?

There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as
before ;

The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound ;
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good
more ;

On the earth, the broken arcs ; in the heaven, a perfect round.

“ All we have will or hoped or dreamed of good, shall exist ;
Not its semblance, but itself ; no beauty, nor good nor
power

Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.

The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard ;
Enough that He heard it once ; we shall hear it by-and-by.”

And once more we find a full confession of Mr. Browning's creed with respect to art in the poem entitled, “ Old Pictures in Florence.” He sees the ghosts of the early Christian Masters, whose work has never been duly appreciated, standing sadly by the mouldering Italian frescos ; and when a friend observes, that if he knew what he ought to praise he would praise it, Mr. Browning answers that the glory of Christian Art lies in its rejecting a limited perfection such as that of Greek Art, the subject of which was finite, and which taught men to submit, and in its daring to be faulty, faulty because its subject was full of infinite hopes and fears, and because it would teach men to aspire.

A large number of Mr. Browning's poems have love for their subject ; and here again we find the same recurring thoughts. In Mr. Tennyson's poems

which treat of love, the temptation to which the characters are exposed is commonly the indulgence of passion in violation of the law of conscience or of duty. In Mr. Browning's, the temptation almost invariably is to sacrifice the passion, either to prudential motives, fear of public opinion, or through supineness of spirit. As the artistic enthusiasm carries the artist through his art to God, so any intense passion, an "outlaw of time and space," gives rise to infinite aspirations and desires, which form the true preparation for a future life.

At a sal^on in Paris, a lady (her husband is somewhere playing at whist) meets her old lover—a literary man who has been successful, has a chair in the Academy, and is himself also married; and she reminds him of a morning ten years ago, when at the sea-side, her arm in his, he had all but confessed his love—some prudential motive, or feeling of doubt or shame, at the last moment restraining him. Four men and women who might have lived true lives are suffering for that cowardice.

“ Now I may speak ! you fool, for all
 Your lore ! WHO made things plain in vain ?
 What was the sea for ? What, the grey
 Sad church, that solitary day,
 Crosses and graves and swallows' call ?

“ Was there nought better than to enjoy ?
 No feat, which, done, would make time break,
 And let us pent-up creatures through
 Into eternity, our due ?
 No forcing earth teach Heaven's employ ?

“No wise beginning, here and now,
 What cannot grow complete (earth's feat)
 And Heaven must finish, there and then?
 No tasting earth's true food for men,
 Its sweet in sad, its sad in sweet?”

“No grasping at love, gaining a share
 O' the sole spark from God's life at strife
 With death, so, sure of range above
 The limits here? For us and love
 Failure; but when God fails, despair.”

In “Youth and Art” it is the same, or almost the same lesson which is enforced. A young sculptor and a girl preparing to appear as an operatic singer live at opposite sides of the street, and amuse themselves by watching each other's windows—they love, or might have loved, but each is poor, and the boy will not be rash; in after life both are successful, as the world goes, but this apparent success is a real failure.

“You meet the Prince at the Board;
 I'm queen myself at *bals-paré*;
 I've married a rich old lord,
 And you're dubb'd knight and an R. A.

“Each life's unfulfill'd you see;
 It hangs still patchy and scrappy:
 We have not sigh'd deep, laugh'd free,
 Starved, feasted, despair'd,—been happy.”

Those periods of life which appear most full of moral purpose to Mr. Tennyson are periods of protracted self-control, and those moments stand eminent in life in which the spirit has struggled victoriously in the cause of conscience against im-

or desire. With Mr. Browning the moments most glorious in which the obscure purpose of y years has been revealed by the lightning of len passion, or in which a resolution that uges the current of life has been taken upon that ht which vivid emotion bestows; and those ds of life are the most full of moral pupose which their direction from moments such as these. the devil, with his prudential motives and sage isos, and chicane of prudent pauses, tempts us to gard the dictates of every transcendent passion.

“ Oh, we’re sunk enough here, God knows!
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho’ seldom, are denied us,
When the spirit’s true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

“ There are flashes struck from midnights,
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honours perish,
Whereby swoln ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse
Which for once had play unstified
Seems the sole work of a life-time
That away the rest have trifled.”

rejoicing in the remembrance of a moment of e passion which determined the whole course life, the speaker exclaims in “By the Fire-:”—

“ How the world is made for each of us !
 How all we perceive and know in it
 Tends to some moment's product thus,
 When a soul declares itself—to wit,
 By its fruit—the thing it does !

“ Be Hate that fruit, or Love that fruit,
 It forwards the General Deed of man,
 And each of the Many helps to recruit
 The life of the race by a general plan ;
 Each living his own, to boot.”

“ Of the virtues and beauties of humanity [Tennyson] views with most affection those which have their natural growth under the shelter of fixed habits and firmly settled opinions ; local and far attachments ; . . . those emotions which are invested with the character of duties ; those of which the objects are, as it were, marked out by the arrangements either of nature or of society, we ourselves exercising no choice : [Mr. Browning] delights in painting the affections which choose their own objects, especially the most powerful of these, passion, love, and of that, the more vehement oftener the more graceful aspects ; selects by preference the subtlest workings and its most unusual and unconventional forms : and shows it at war with the forms and customs of society.”*

But love here, as every other high form of passion

* These words are taken from a comparison of the conservative with the movement poet, which forms a part of Mills' Essay on Alfred de Vigny—a comparison strikingly applicable throughout to Mr. Tennyson and Mr. Browning.

or enthusiasm, implies a supreme Loving Will and an eternal life for the individual, because gifts prove their use; and in the apparent failure and disappointment of the loving heart there is the true success—everlasting desire, aspiration, and endeavour. This is the thought brought out in those two remarkable poems, “Love in a Life,” and “Life in a Love.”

Here again, as in every instance, each of the poets seizes a partial truth. Which truth of the two is the more important I cannot say. But I do venture to say, that if passion may degrade itself to unworthy objects, or warp the operation of certain of our powers by subtle encroachments; self-control, self-superintendence, and so-called obedience to duty, may descend to a mere trade, a gross and obvious mechanism, agreeable to the lethargy of our nature because it relieves us from any unexpected summons of sudden emotion, and from the difficult casuistry of the higher spirit of justice. The Duty before whom flowers laugh in their beds, and through whom the most ancient Heavens are fresh and strong, is a living One whose countenance changes for ever with new thoughts and feelings, whose limbs are instinct with the spirit of joy, and whose heart can never be represented in a formula. No one felt this more deeply than he whose phrases I have just now made my own—our great poet and thinker—Wordsworth.

With regard to the political passion, again Mr. Browning is in contrast with Mr. Tennyson. Mr. Tennyson's ideal of a patriot is an English gentle-

man who has a seat in Parliament, and carries a valuable amendment. Mr. Browning sympathises rather with the bright enthusiasm for freedom of more southern nations. Luigi, an Italian youth, having resolved on setting out one spring night to assassinate the Austrian emperor, is questioned by his mother as to the ground for killing him. Let us first recal to mind these verses of the Revelation—
 “And he that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, and as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star.”

Mother. Once more your ground for killing him?—then go!

Luigi. Now do you ask me, or make sport of me?
 How first the Austrians got these provinces . . .
 (If that is all I'll satisfy you soon)
 — Never by conquest but by cunning, for
 That treaty whereby . . .

Mother. Well?

Luigi. (Sure he's arrived
 The tell-tale cuckoo: spring's his confidant,
 And he lets out her April purposes!)
 Or . . . better go at once to modern times.
 He has . . . they have . . . in fact I understand
 But can't re-state the matter; that's my boast:
 Others could reason it out to you, and prove
 Things they have made me feel.

Mother. Why go to night?
 Morn's for adventure. Jupiter is now
 A morning star. I cannot hear you, Luigi!

Luigi. "I am the bright and morning star," God saith—
 And "to such an one I give the morning star!"
 The gift of the morning star—have I God's gift
 Of the morning star?

Here again each of the poets catches half a truth. Without reverence for duty, of which freedom is the essential condition, there is no true love of freedom. That is Mr. Tennyson's part of the truth. But passion for a righteous cause may create new forms of duty, and give the adequate power to fulfil them; and if it does not, the failure is itself a success, which God who can give the morning star will approve. That is Mr. Browning's part. Once more: compare Mr. Browning's manner of estimating the worth of knowledge with that of Mr. Tennyson. It is each positive gain, each scientific discovery, or mechanical invention that Mr. Tennyson chiefly values. To Mr. Browning the gleams we have of knowledge are valuable, because they sting with hunger for full light. The goal of knowledge is God Himself. Its most precious part is that which is least positive—those momentary intuitions of things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, "fallings from us, vanishings."* Even the revelation of God in Christianity left room for doubts and guesses, because growth is the law of man's nature, and perfect knowledge would have stayed his growth;† while, at the same time, its assurance of a boundless life beyond the grave saved Christianity from the failure of Heathenism, which could not extinguish

* See *Easter Day*, 27, 28. † *A Death in the Desert*.

man's longings for a higher than material or worldly perfection, but was unable to utilise them, or suggest how they could be changed from restlessness and self-conflict to a sustaining hope.* I ask my hearers to complete the impression which I have endeavoured to produce, by the thoughtful reading of a poem in which these ideas of Mr. Browning find, perhaps, their noblest expression—Rabbi Ben Ezra.

I have illustrated Mr. Browning's system of thought chiefly by his shorter poems; but to the same central ideas belong "Paracelsus," "Sordello," and "Easter-Day." In each we read "a soul's tragedy." Paracelsus aspires to absolute knowledge, the attainment of which is forbidden by the conditions of our existence. In the same poem a second phase of the same error—that of refusing for the present to submit to the terms of life—is represented in Aprile, who would "love infinitely and be loved." Paracelsus is the victim of an aspiring *intellect*; Aprile, of the temptations of a yearning, passionate *heart*. Mr. Browning decided to complete our view of this side of the subject by showing the failure of an attempt to manifest the infinite scope, and realise the infinite energy of *will*, the inability of a great nature to deploy all its magnificent resources, and by compelling men, in some way or other, to acknowledge that nature as their master, to gain a full sense of its existence. With this purpose he wrote a companion poem to "Paracelsus"—"Sordello."

But the same subject has another side, and this

* Cleon.

also Mr. Browning felt himself bound to present. It was the error of Paracelsus and Aprile and Sordello to endeavour to overleap the limitations of life, or to force within those limits an infinity of knowledge, emotion, or volition, which they are unable to contain. It is no less an error to content oneself with the present conditions of our existence, to cease straining beyond them towards the highest objects of thought, love, and desire,—in a word, to God. And here is the side of the subject which is regarded in “Easter-Day.” Why is the condemnation of the soul by God in that Dream inevitable? Because the speaker failed in his dream in the probation of life—accepted the finite joys and aims of earth (each with some taint in it) as sufficient and final, and never grasped at, or yearned towards, the heavenly influences and joys that flitted faint and rare above the earthly, but which were taintless, and therefore best.*

* It is worth while to call the reader’s attention, in connection with the view taken in this study of the two poets, to the fact, that Mr. Tennyson is never done with his poems: each new edition shows some new touches. Obedience to the law of beauty is supreme with him. Mr. Browning husbands his strength, by forgetting what is behind to press forward to what is before. The *endeavour*, the *aspiration*, seems precious to him.

In speaking of the passage of “The Princess” which criticizes the revolutionary spirit in France, I ought perhaps to have made allowance for the fact that it is put into the mouth of “the Tory member’s elder son.” However, I think, the passage expresses nearly Mr. Tennyson’s own opinions.



THE PECULIARITIES
OF
POPULAR ORATORY,
BY
DAVID SHERLOCK, ESQ., Q.C.





THE PECULIARITIES
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POPULAR ORATORY.

THE reader of history cannot fail to have observed the many remarkable instances of extraordinary influence acquired and retained by individuals over nations and communities.

That men distinguished for their achievements in war should have attained this pre-eminence is perfectly reasonable ; they will be naturally selected as leaders—amongst peaceable nations, for the purpose of protecting their territories, and with warlike populations, to extend their dominions. Furthermore, men of tried wisdom and practical experience will be sought for ; and their worth being proved, they will be retained in authority, as a course the most advantageous to the nation with whose interests they have associated themselves. The selection of kings and generals mentioned by Tacitus is in accordance with the dispositions and interests both of nations and individuals. “They select their kings for their nobility, their generals for their valour”—“Reges ex

nobilitate, duces ex virtute sumunt." But when we find nations governed in their public conduct by men who, apart from their eloquence, don't appear gifted with the particular practical qualifications that usually command esteem and respect; who are neither remarkable for physical courage in war, nor for the successful management of their domestic affairs; when we find Demosthenes successfully exciting the Athenians to engage in new wars, though it was well known that he had run away from the battle-field; when we find William Pitt entrusted with the fate and destiny of an empire, though unequal to the management of his domestic affairs—we are led to consider to what we are to attribute the peculiar influences that orators have ever exercised over human society. This extraordinary power has been in existence before history; it is coeval with the use of language; it has existed before the rules of rhetoric, just as various dialects have been formed before grammar was known; it has exercised its influence in every clime and in every age.

It is not peculiar to any institutions or any government; its cause and origin must be traced to the human heart, to the peculiar susceptibilities of mankind, and to the mode in which these susceptibilities are operated on and influenced.

Most men, and nations in proportion to their civilization, derive pleasure from a combination of agreeable sounds; and the soft cadences of the human voice, when tuned to harmony, are unsurpassed in their effect, whether to soothe or to excite.

Music is peculiarly attractive ; it exercises a very considerable influence, particularly over large assemblies, and has been adopted as an important element in modern education. Amongst the ancients, its importance was much more felt than in these days of rigid practical utilitarianism. Music may be said to have been the basis of Greek education. The term "Mousike" occasionally comprehended everything connected with the expansion of the mind ; but music itself, including poetry, held the first place in the system of juvenile instruction. It is remarkable, that next to music came "Arithmetic;" a strange combination of the coldest and driest with the most passionate and imaginative of human studies.

The pursuit and study of kindred arts led to the appreciation of oratory. With such a system of national education, Eloquence, the sister of Poetry, was sure to be held in high estimation ; and the institutions of ancient Greece were in themselves highly favourable to the cultivation of oratory. The study of Eloquence was adopted as a profession in itself, not, as in the present day, as ancillary to some other profession ; not merely to ensure success at the Bar, or in the Senate, or to add to the influence of the Pulpit. Oratory was adopted as an independent pursuit, and the men who were successful in the practice of it were not only remarkable in their own time, but have transmitted their fame to after ages. The several states of Greece—the independent monarchs who had occasion to enter into

treaties with them, had their staff of paid orators, who were deputed, as occasion might require, to represent as ambassadors the monarch or the particular state that had retained for the time the benefit of their professional services, and by their eloquence to sustain the particular interests that they were paid to support. As the constitution of the States of Greece generally entitled the population at large to decide on public affairs, ambassadors were not deputed to the head of the state, but to the people ; and the duties of these ambassadors were, ostensibly at least, of a much more active kind than falls to the lot of those who discharge the important functions of the office in the present day. I may instance Pithon, the Bysantian, who was in the pay of Philip of Macedon, and who was constantly employed as one of his ambassadors, and on one memorable occasion was deputed to the Council of Beotia to oppose the eloquence of Demosthenes, who attended there as one of the representatives of Athens.

These orators were recognised as advocates, and were not personally bound to continue to sustain the particular views which they were employed to support after that employment had ceased ; *consistency* in political views was not expected from them, neither did these oratorical ambassadors always find their eloquence successful. At the siege of Athens by Sylla, (B.C. 87,) a deputation from the besieged waited on the Roman general. They did not make any distinct proposition, but they were loud in the praises of Theseus and other of their heroes, and

descanted on the exploits of the Athenians over the Medes, until they were interrupted by Sylla, who took a practical view of the position, and said—“Gentlemen orators, you may go back, and keep your rhetorical flourishes for another occasion ; for my part I was not sent to Athens to be made acquainted with your ancient prowess, but to chastise your modern revolt.”

Though I have referred to Greece only as a school of eloquence, I should not omit the fact, that amongst all nations having any pretension to civilization or literature, oratory was highly esteemed. The Arabs valued themselves on eloquence as the highest of their accomplishments, and the title of “*Kliâteb*,” or orator, was one of the greatest marks of distinction amongst them. And so persuaded were they of their superiority in eloquence, that they would not admit that any nation understood the art of speaking in public except themselves and the Persians ; the latter, however, being in their estimation far inferior to themselves. To illustrate the appreciation of eloquence and purity of language amongst the Arabs, I may mention that the Koran is said to be a specimen of the utmost elegance of language ; it is written in the dialect of the tribe of *Koreish*, the most accomplished amongst the Arabs, with some mixtures, though rare, of other dialects. It is confessedly the standard of the Arabic tongue, the most ancient language in the world ; and, as orthodox Mahometans believe, and are taught by the book itself, inimitable by any human pen, and therefore

supposed to be alone sufficient to convince the world of its divine origin. And in several passages of the Koran, Mahomet challenges the most eloquent in Arabia to produce a single chapter to be compared with it. Chap. 2. Chap. 17. Not being acquainted with Arabic, I have failed to appreciate the beauty of the Koran; for Slade's translation, though possibly very accurate, has no pretensions to any superiority in eloquence.

It is not within the design of this lecture to occupy you with any comments on the qualities that distinguish the form of perfect orators. The treatises on this subject are numerous and varied, and the question has been exhausted; yet the whole matter may be comprehended in one sentence of Plato's *Gorgias*, who says, "an orator should have the subtlety of a logician, the science of a philosopher, the diction of a poet, the voice and gesture of an accomplished actor." These are combinations very rarely to be met with in any single individual.

In considering the peculiar art by which orators have from time to time succeeded in arresting attention and engaging the sympathies of their audiences, we must feel that the topics have been varied as the occasions that elicited them, and different as the audiences to which they were addressed. The language that is attractive to one nation is unfitted for another; the expressions which will elicit applause from a popular meeting, will probably produce a feeling of repugnance and disapprobation in a more educated assembly. As instances of

difference of language employed with different nations, I may refer to the following illustrations. Napoleon the First roused the enthusiasm of his soldiers, at one of his most celebrated battles in Egypt, by showing them the Pyramids, and saying—“Soldats, quarante siècles vous regardent.” Now, if an English general were to attempt to stimulate his men by telling them that forty centuries were looking down on them, he would simply fail to make himself understood. At the siege of Ismael, when the Russian army were dismayed at the height of the ramparts, Suwarrow exclaimed to those near him—“You see those walls, they are very high ; but the Empress commands us to take possession of them !” In the early days of the caliphs a Mussulman general, seeing his men flying, cried out—“Whither are you running ? the enemy is not in that direction. You have been told that the caliph is dead, but what matter if he be living or dead ; God is living, and is looking at you. Forward ! March !”

Contrasted with these exciting appeals we have Nelson’s famous signal at the great battle that closed his brilliant career—“England expects that every man will do his duty.” Thus we have the Frenchman stimulated by love of glory, the Englishman by a sense of duty, the Russian by attachment to his sovereign, and the Mussulman by devotion to his God !

A very singular mode of influencing an audience was adopted by Cato, the Censor, whose hostility to

the Carthagenians was so intense, that he concluded all his speeches in the Roman senate with the words—"Carthage must be destroyed." On one occasion, at the termination of an address to the senate, he let fall from his robe, as if by accident some Lybian figs; and when the senators expressed their admiration of the size and appearance of the fruit, he said—"The country where this fruit grows is only three days' sail from Rome." A suggestion well understood by the audience to which it was addressed.

But notwithstanding this difference in national feelings and sentiments, and the diversity in the education and opinions of assemblies, there are some principles that public speakers have always kept in view as the foundation of all successful oratory, and some arts that have been almost universally resorted to in various shapes, to carry conviction and ensure success. The first and principal object of a public speaker is to impress his audience with a conviction of his sincerity. This is generally effected, whenever the occasion permits it, by showing that the interests of his hearers are identical with his own; by associating himself as far as possible with their sentiments and opinions, and by impressing them with the conviction that they are likely to derive a personal benefit by adopting his views.

I cannot better illustrate these observations than by referring to the opening sentence of the celebrated speech of Demosthenes "on the Crown." The occasion on which it was delivered was the following

Demosthenes, whose opposition to Philip of Macedon had excited the hostility of the partisans of that monarch, had impeached Aeschines; and the latter, who was supported by all the interest of the king of Macedon, resolved to retaliate on the first opportunity. This was afforded him by Ctesiphon, who was a personal friend of Demosthenes, having proposed that he should be presented with a golden crown as an acknowledgment of his services to the state in spending a considerable sum of his own private money in the repairs of the walls of Athens. The impeachment of Ctesiphon was a direct attack on Demosthenes, and the very eloquent oration of Aeschines delivered on that occasion was entirely directed against *him*. When Demosthenes came to defend himself before the assembly of the people, of whom about five hundred had the privilege of voting on the occasion, he commenced thus—"In the first place, ye men of Athens, I make my prayer to all the powers of heaven that the same amount of kindly feeling which I entertain towards the state, and to each of you individually, may be extended to me in this important trial."

Nothing could be better adapted to a popular audience, nothing more calculated to secure the attention and enlist the sympathies of his countrymen.

The Athenians must have observed to each other on hearing this opening sentence—"How perfectly fair this is. How very reasonable! How conscious he must be of his own honesty." This opening

appeal had all the impressive character of a prayer, and almost the sacred solemnity of an oath.

The real question at issue was the plain infraction of the law, which forbade that any public honours should be conferred on a citizen who had not passed his accounts, and unfortunately Demosthenes was in that position when Ctesiphon voted him a crown. But the skilful orator avoided any reference to this point. He assumed that the question to be discussed was his whole public conduct; to this he applied the power of his eloquence. He urged his devotion to the state, and his honesty of purpose, notwithstanding some unfortunate events that had resulted from his advice, and he thus carried with him the votes of the great majority of the assembly. His adversary retired to Rhodes, and established there a school of eloquence. Reading one day for his pupils both orations, *his* was much praised, but that of Demosthenes was received with thunders of applause. "What would your feelings have been," said Aeschines to his pupils, "had you heard him deliver it?" As a display of oratory this speech is undoubtedly very striking, but the successful result must be attributed to the conviction of the speaker's honesty, and the identity of feeling with his audience, which he carefully impressed on them, and on which he took care to keep their attention steadily fixed.

Some remarkable instances of the orator identifying himself with his audience are presented in the discourses of St. Paul, who was unquestionably an

erudite scholar and an accomplished speaker. He moulded his topics and modified his language to suit the particular locality in which he delivered his discourses, and the feelings of the audience to which they were addressed. Thus, when speaking at Jerusalem, he tells his hearers that he is a Jew; and though born at Tarsus in Cilicia, that he was brought up in the city where he was then addressing them, at the feet of Gamaliel; that he was taught according to the law of the fathers, zealous "as you all are this day."

Such an address was highly calculated to make a favourable impression on a Jewish audience. And, again, Paul knowing that one portion of his hearers were Sadducees and others Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men, brethren, I am a Pharisee;" and he intimates that he derived those tenets from his father. The result was a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, "and the multitude was divided;" and though a scene of violence resulted from it, the speaker undoubtedly secured some adherents from the announcement which he made of his religious opinions.

But the same apostle, when addressing the Athenians, does not announce himself as a Jew; he endeavours to enlist the attention and favour of his audience by introducing a quotation from one of their own poets, as he says, for he cites Aratus, a native of Cilicia, his own countryman. And though the Greeks had established themselves at Cilicia, and had founded important institutions for instruction

at Tarsus, the inhabitants were, strictly speaking, Greeks, though in addressing an audience at Athens the speaker was not likely to refer to this distinctly. To come down to instances in modern times. The late Lord Palmerston, who had a thorough knowledge of human nature, passed as an Irishman in his visits to his property in this country, or when receiving deputations from Ireland; but when presiding at an agricultural dinner in Hampshire he used to tell the farmers assembled on the occasion that he was one of themselves, and that he was born within a few miles from Romsey, where they were then assembled.

Lord Wensleydale used invariably to mention the city banquets, when he had occasion to make a speech there, that he had got the first brief he ever held from the Corporation of the City of London, and I presume the citizens who heard him felt honoured by an eminent judge and distinguished nobleman associating his success with his connection with them.

There is one topic by which accomplished speakers seek to engage the favourable attention of their hearers, and it is so generally resorted to that it may have been found highly conducive to success, and that is *flattery*. You will find it used in every variety of public speaking, addressed to every class of audience, from those whose rank, education, and experience might be supposed to render them impervious, to the congregated thousands of impulsive Irishmen who were never tired of hearing from the most popular orator of modern times that they were

“the finest peasantry on the face of the earth,” and, of course, they believed it.

One of the most remarkable instances of the skilful application of highly-seasoned flattery is to be found in the celebrated speech of our countryman, the Right Hon. Edmund Burke, before the House of Lords, assembled at Westminster Hall, on the occasion of the impeachment of Warren Hastings.

This celebrated trial, that lasted altogether about seven years, did not in itself possess much that was likely to excite public interest. The transactions that led to the impeachment took place in India, a country by no means so well known at that time as it is now, and amongst a people whose interests did not engross much public attention in England.

The charges against Warren Hastings consisted of twenty-three distinct articles of impeachment, comprised in 460 closely printed pages; and although the ex-governor was accused of various acts of cruelty and oppression, the British public generally knew very little of the populations or individuals who were alleged to have suffered from his injustice; and we must attribute the intense and prolonged excitement which continued during the whole of these proceedings to the interest produced by the unrivalled eloquence of the men then engaged in that contest, amongst whom stood pre-eminently conspicuous two of our countrymen—and both natives of this city—Richard Brindsley Sheridan and Edmund Burke.

I had proposed to illustrate some of my observa-

tions by copious extracts from the former celebrated orator, but I find that "Sheridan" has been specially selected as the subject of his lecture by a gentleman far more competent to do justice to his name and reputation than I am, and I think it unfair to intrude on what, for this occasion, he has made his own property.

I may, however, be permitted to excite your curiosity to hear some specimens of the eloquence of Richard Brindsley Sheridan, by stating that he delivered a speech in the House of Commons, on the impeachment of Warren Hastings, that appears to have elicited more admiration, and been the subject of more enthusiastic praise, than any other effort of eloquence that I am aware of. *Pitt* said of it "That it surpassed all the eloquence of ancient and modern times; that it possessed everything that genius or art could furnish to agitate or control the human mind." *Fox* declared that "all he had ever heard, all he had ever read, when compared to it dwindled into nothing, and vanished like vapour before the sun." *Burke* pronounced it to be "the most astonishing effort of eloquence, argument, and art of which there was any record or tradition."

Byron described it thus :—

" When the loud cry of trampled Hindostan
Arose to heaven in her appeal to man,
His was the thunder, his the avenging rod,
The wrath, the delegated voice of God,
Which shook the nations through his lips, and blazed
Till vanquished senates trembled as they praised."

Burke, in his celebrated speech, did not rest satisfied with detailing with thrilling interest the various charges which were the ground of the impeachment against Warren Hastings; he thought it necessary to operate by the persuasive influence of flattery on each of the branches of the House of Lords—the tribunal to which he was addressing himself. He flattered the monarch; he flattered the Prince of Wales; he flattered the hereditary peers; he flattered the peers who had been elevated to that rank, and he flattered with profuse liberality the bench of bishops. He addressed the assembled peers as follows:—

“Do we want a tribunal? My lords, no example of antiquity, nothing in the modern world, nothing in the range of human imagination can supply us with a tribunal like this. Here, my lords, we see virtually in the mind’s eye that sacred majesty of the crown under whose authority you sit, and whose power you exercise. We see in that invisible authority what we all feel in reality and life—the beneficent powers and protecting justice of his majesty. We have here the heir-apparent to the crown such as the fond wishes of the people of England wish an heir-apparent to be. We have here all the branches of the royal family in a situation between majesty and subjection, between the sovereign and the subject, offering a pledge in that situation for the support of the rights of the crown and the liberties of the people, both which extremities they touch. My lords, we have a great hereditary peerage here—those who have their own honour, the honour of their ancestors to guard, and who will justify, as they have always justified, that provision in the constitution by which justice is made an hereditary office. My lords, we have here a new nobility, who have risen and exalted themselves by various merits, by great military services, which have extended the fame of this coun-

try from the rising to the setting sun. We have those who, by various civil merits and various civil talents, have been exalted to a situation which they well deserve, and in which they will justify the favour of their sovereign and the good opinion of their fellow-subjects, and make them rejoice to see those virtuous characters, that were the other day upon a level with them, now exalted above them in rank, but feeling with them in sympathy what they felt in common with them before. We have persons exalted from the practice of the law, from the place in which they administered high though subordinate justice, to a seat here, to enlighten with their knowledge, and to strengthen with their votes, those principles which have distinguished the courts in which they have presided. My lords, you have here also the lights of our religion—you have the bishops of England. You have the representatives of that religion which says that their God is love, that the very vital spirit of their institution is charity; a religion which so much hates oppression that, when the God whom we adore appeared in human form, He did not appear in a form of greatness and majesty, but in sympathy with the lowest of the people, and thereby made it a firm and ruling principle that their welfare was the object of all government, since the person who was the Master of nature chose to appear Himself in a subordinate situation. These are the considerations which influence them, which animate them, and will animate them against all opposition; knowing that He who is called first among them, and first among us all, both of the flock that is fed, and of those who feed it, made Himself the servant of all. My lords, these are the securities which we have in all the constituent parts of the body of this house; we know them, we reckon, we rest upon them, and commit safely the interests of India and of humanity into your hands. Therefore it is with confidence, that ordered by the Commons, I impeach Warren Hastings, Esq., of high crimes and misdemeanours."

Every constituent part of the assembly was separately offered the tribute of appropriate adula-

tion. Notwithstanding all the art and eloquence of Burke, the House of Lords acquitted Warren Hastings; but the trial cost him £70,000. This in itself would have been a heavy penalty if he was guilty; but it was a grievous injustice if he was innocent, as he was declared to be.

I could give you many more instances of the successful introduction of flattery as an important element in securing attention and ensuring success. I find it introduced into every class of discourse, and I have arrived at the conclusion that all men, and, I may add, most women, are susceptible of flattery, provided it be skilfully applied.

Another of the artifices frequently resorted to, though by no means so unobjectionable as that to which I have been referring, is to endeavour to prejudice the judgment of the hearers by representing that the conduct of the opposite party has been insulting or wanting in proper respect to them. This particular topic operates on the vanity of the audience, and no assembly, no tribunal, is entirely impervious to its influence. The concluding speech of Edmund Burke, (not the one to which I have alluded) is an illustration of what I have said. He sought with all the vigor of his eloquence to prejudice the House of Lords, who were to decide on the fate of Warren Hastings, by representing that the demeanour of the latter was designedly disrespectful to their lordships. In summing up he said he wished to call their lordships' attention to four points. The first was the

demeanour of the prisoner. With respect to that he said :—

“ As to the demeanour of the prisoner during the course of this trial, I think it affords grounds for the most serious observations. It was such conduct as I am sure has never yet been held by any person standing in the awful predicament with the prisoner ; it was not the boldness of conscious innocence, but the insolence of hardened guilt. I ask your lordships to examine the conduct of every person who has stood impeached before this house, and to compare it with the demeanour of the prisoner, from that of the Duke of Suffolk, Lord Bacon, Lord Macclesfield, down to the smugglers who were impeached in the reign of William III., and your lordships will find the such insolent and daring demeanour has never before been displayed. Your lordships will recollect the name of Lord Verulam—in *knowledge*, to speak of every thing the most profound—in *learning*, of every thing the most various and extensive !—in *discovery*, of every thing the most enlightened and the most penetrating—is to mention Lord Verulam. This man—whose least distinction was that he was a peer, a chancellor, and the son of a chief justice—this man was not exempt from frailty. The Commons discovered some spots on the sun, and impeached him. How did he conduct himself ? With humility, with a consciousness of his situation, with contrition, notwithstanding which the House fined him £40,000 a sum equal to £100,000 at the present day. It is not my wish that the defendant should be abject, should be mean ; only wish him to conduct himself with decorum to the court that tries him, and to the body that prosecutes him.”

If this course of argument be reprehensible in the advocate, it is inexcusable in a judge. I know that in modern times, no such misconduct can be imputed to any of Her Majesty's judges ; but at the early part of the last century there occurred a ve

striking instance of the judicial position being used to prejudice the jury most unfairly against a prisoner on trial for a capital offence. I allude to the case of the poet Savage, an unfortunate man, of great talent, but of very reprehensible habits and conduct. He was accused of having killed a man in a midnight quarrel at a tavern. Mr. Justice Page, who presided at his trial at the Old Bailey, used every effort to prejudice the jury against the prisoner. He addressed them thus :—

“Gentlemen of the jury, you are to consider that Mr. Savage is a very great man ; a much greater man than you or I, gentlemen of the jury ; that *he* wears very fine clothes ; *much* finer clothes than you or I, gentlemen of the jury ; that *he* has abundance of money in his pocket ; much *more* money than *you* or *I*, gentlemen of the jury : but, gentlemen of the jury, is it not a very hard case, gentlemen of the jury, that Mr. Savage should therefore kill you or me, gentlemen of the jury.”

The result may be anticipated. The jury, exasperated by the language addressed to them from the bench, convicted the prisoner, who was sentenced to death. In the instance that I have mentioned, you perceive that the judge, in order to induce the jury to adopt his views, though in social rank much superior to the members of an Old Bailey jury, affected to identify himself with them, and to represent the unfortunate prisoner as the common enemy of both.

This mode of creating a prejudice is constantly resorted to, even when the offences of which the accused is guilty ought to be in themselves quite

sufficient to ensure conviction. When Robespierre, who was a monster of cruelty, who well deserved the death to which he had doomed hundreds of innocent victims, was first impeached by "Louvet," the speaker did not so much insist on his crimes against the people at large as on his offences against the members of the National Convention, before whom the accusation was made. He concluded thus :—

"Robespierre, I accusé thee (for the Republican simplicity of language which the French call 'tutoyer' was then adopted,) I accuse thee of having for a long time slandered the purest of the patriots. I accuse thee of it; and I am convinced that thou hast no just claim to the honour of a citizen, and, above all, to that of a representative of the people. I accuse thee of having calumniated these same men in those terrible days of the first week of September; that is to say, at a period when every imputation that was uttered by thee amounted to a death warrant. I accuse thee of having to the best of thy ability misrepresented, slandered, and persecuted the representatives of the nation; of having misrepresented their authority, and brought it into contempt. I accuse thee of having continually thrust thyself forward as an object of worship, of having permitted thyself to be pointed out as the only virtuous man in France, and to be designated as the only man who could save the people. I accuse thee of having oppressed, by every means that intrigue and cruelty could suggest, the electoral assembly of the department of Paris; and, in conclusion, I accuse thee of having plainly and distinctly aimed at supreme power."

This discourse produced the greatest excitement amongst the deputies present; and it is to be regretted that it was not so far successful as to have stayed the career of that monster who was thus de-

ounced, and have thus saved many lives of innocent victims.

The extract to which I have referred calls attention to the period of the first French Revolution. It is very remarkable that this age of liberty was not at all fruitful in celebrated orators. The French Revolution produced great generals, and many distinguished scientific men, but no great orator whose reputation has extended to other countries or outlived his own time; nor the names of Vergniaud, Gaudet, Barbarouse, Lally, Kersaint, Henri Larivière, Languinais, Ferriol, Rabaut Saint Etienne, though celebrities in their day, are now almost unknown. There is a favourite theory that eloquence flourishes with liberty, but experience shows that such a soil is by no means necessary to its growth, nor always congenial to it.

The reigns of Louis the XIV. and XV., though in no means favourable to the liberty of the subject, are remarkable in the history of French literature for the accomplished orators that adorned these periods.

Pulpit eloquence, in particular, attained a pre-eminence that has never since been equalled in France. I am not about to impose upon you extracts from French sermons, but I may mention that Voltaire, whose prejudices were certainly not in favour of ecclesiastics, selected in his "Encyclopedia," as an illustration of the word "Eloquence," an extract from a sermon of Massillon, and on a subject, so peculiarly antagonistic to the views which Voltaire himself advocated. In stating that the period

of the Revolution was deficient in orators, I must not be supposed to have forgotten "Mirabeau," who has been aptly styled "the Demosthenes of France;" but Mirabeau was "before" and not "of" the French Revolution: he died in the year 1791, at the age of forty-two, and his death was a national calamity. He was preparing to control the popular movement, and he was the last barrier that restrained the torrent of democracy within proper limits. His remains were the first that were buried in the Pantheon—to be removed in a few years to make room for the body of Marat.

His most famous discourse was in support of the proposition of the celebrated financier, Necker, who proposed a contribution of one-fourth of the revenue, or, what is more intelligible, an income tax of five shillings in the pound.

The debate in the National Assembly had lasted a considerable time; Mirabeau had had spoken three times, but had failed to induce the Assembly to adopt his views. It was growing late, and no decision had been arrived at; (when I say late, it was near four o'clock in the afternoon;) the patience of the deputies was nearly exhausted; there was every probability of an adjournment without funds having been voted, and this would have resulted in national bankruptcy, when Mirabeau made one final effort of eloquence, and carried the Assembly triumphantly with him. And yet a similar speech would not have persuaded a British House of Commons to pass a similar measure.

The speech to which I have last referred was unprepared, and delivered on the impulse of the moment; but, as a rule, the best and most effective speeches have been carefully prepared. Ancient orators bestowed considerable care on the preparation of their speeches, and some of the best of the orations of Cicero were never delivered at all. Five of the seven orations against Verres were never spoken. The second philippic against Mark Anthony was never delivered; and it is doubtful whether Cicero's best speech, that in defence of Milo, was ever delivered; for Milo, when he read the speech at Marseilles, to which he was banished, consoled himself by saying, that if the speech had been delivered, he would not have enjoyed the luxury of eating the excellent oysters for which Marseilles was then celebrated.

One of the most remarkable speeches in modern times—published but not delivered—was the speech reported as delivered on Penenden Heath, by Shiel, on the 24th October, 1828. This very remarkable meeting was convened to discuss the Catholic question, which was the great political topic of the day. The meeting was held in the open air; there were present about thirty or forty thousand persons of the yeomen of Kent, about ten thousand of the men of Kent being on horseback. The speakers addressed the meeting from waggons. I have heard the particulars from a near relative of mine who accompanied Shiel from London. As he was driving up he was met by one of the reporters of the *Sun* newspaper, who asked him for a copy of his speech, saying that

he was aware that Mr. Shiel was in the habit of committing to writing the speeches that he proposed to deliver. Shiel hesitated, saying that possibly he might not have an opportunity of speaking, but he ultimately yielded, and the draft of the speech was immediately forwarded to London. As the meeting progressed it became more and more difficult to procure a hearing, and Mr. Shee, afterwards Judge Shee, and Sheil both came prepared to speak, and both stood up together. Lord Camden, the lord lieutenant of Kent, who stood near the high sheriff, and who was very anxious to hear Sheil, but did not know his appearance, seeing two persons presenting themselves, and hearing cries of "Sheil," and "Shee," which could not be well distinguished, assumed that the stouter and more imposing looking of the candidates was the great Irish orator, and thus Mr. Shee was brought before the meeting and delivered his speech, whilst Shiel was silenced, for he only uttered a few sentences, late in the evening, when the meeting was breaking up. The printed speech was a noble effort of eloquence, intended for a hostile audience. It avoided every topic likely to give offence, whilst every argument calculated to persuade and conciliate, was skilfully interwoven with highly-wrought appeals, which this skilful orator dwelt on with a felicity of expression that has scarcely ever been surpassed. It is exceedingly interesting to observe the opinions entertained by great men of their contemporaries, and possibly of their rivals.

The late Chief Justice Bushe thus described Shiel :—

“ His mind is one of the richest in poetry and eloquence at I ever met with. For the purpose of producing an effect on a popular audience in Ireland, I consider him as standing the very first rank. The rich poetical invectives with which his speeches abound, if versified, would be fine satirical poetry.”

Notwithstanding this well-deserved praise, Shiel is more adapted to a cultivated assembly than to a popular audience ; and his great contemporary, Connell, whose physical superiority gave him great advantages, was much more effective as a popular orator.

Charles Kendal Bushe, whom I have quoted, deservedly ranks amongst the most gifted of our orators. Lord Brougham speaks of him thus :—

“ He has not the condensed and vigorous demonstration of Plunkett, but we have an equal display of chastened abstinence, of absolute freedom from all the vices of the Irish school, with, perhaps, a more winning grace of diction ; and I who have witnessed it agree in ascribing the greatest power to a manner that none could resist. The utmost that partial criticism could do to find a fault, was to praise the suavity of the orator at the expense of his fire.”

John Kemble described Bushe as the greatest orator of his day off the stage.

But, in my humble judgment, no speech actually delivered, or prepared for a public assembly, by any orator, no matter how gifted, has equalled in its combination of everything that is calculated to attract and persuade—a work of fiction, but the production

of a mind that for versatility of genius stands unrivalled. I allude to Shakespeare's speech of Mark Anthony over the dead body of Julius Cæsar. This is Fiction; but we must distinguish fiction from falsehood. A speech was actually spoken by Mark Anthony on that occasion, and with the results described by Shakespeare. What was the actual language used on the occasion we know not; Shakespeare's brilliant imagination and knowledge of human nature supplies the omission of the historian. But we know that the result of Mark Anthony's discourse was to turn the whole tide of popular feeling from intense admiration of Brutus as the liberator of his country, to fierce denunciation of the same man. And yet the position of Brutus after the death of Cæsar, and the scene of the assassination itself, is well described as one of the most spirit-strirring that human imagination can produce. The poet Akenside considers it more exciting than the contemplation of the heavenly bodies. He says:—

“ Is there among the adamantine spheres
Wheeling unshaken through the boundless void,
Aught that with half such majesty can fill
The human bosom, as when Brutus rose
Refulgent from the stroke of Cæsar's fate
Amid the crowd of patriots, and his arm
Aloft extending like eternal Jove
When guilt brings down the thunder, call'd aloud
On Tully's name, and shook his crimson sword
Of Justice in his wrapt astonish'd eye,
And bade the father of his country hail !
For lo, the tyrant prostrate in the dust,
And Rome again is free.”

And yet the eloquence of Mark Anthony was the means of driving this hero into exile. This passage in Shakespeare to which I have referred, is given as an illustration in most of the collections of speeches used in instructing pupils in the art of elocution, and many of my hearers may think it unreasonable to be furnished with specimens that they have been familiar with from their school-days. But experience will teach us that many of the flowers that we cull in the early paths of youth, are unsurpassed in beauty by those we subsequently meet in our wanderings in later life. Just as the tourist who sets out from these shores on his first continental excursion will—if he had the benefit of the advice of an experienced traveller of taste and education—make his first stop at the splendid old city of Rouen, where he will be amazed at the magnificence of the ecclesiastical architecture, and he will leave it with this feeling—“if I find so many wonders near home, what may I expect to see as I advance?” And yet few have found that the impression made on them by the Imperial City on the banks of the Seine, has been surpassed or equalled by any thing that they have seen in their subsequent travels.

The speech of Mark Anthony roused the passions of the Roman populace, and involved the nation in civil war.

It is lamentable to find the gift of Eloquence and the great power which accompanies it used for such purposes; and whilst Ireland can furnish numerous instances of great and gifted men, it is a subject for

just national pride, that in the various periods of her exciting history, she has produced some statesmen whose honesty of purpose and sterling qualities of heart have won for them as much esteem and admiration as has been awarded to the most brilliant efforts of their eloquence, or the most triumphant results of their oratory.

We cannot judge calmly of the men of the present day, or of those who have passed away within a period comparatively recent; but a sufficient period has elapsed since the death of the Right Honourable Henry Grattan to justify me in closing my observations by adopting the eulogium passed on him by that remarkable man, the Reverend Sidney Smith:—

“Great men hallow a whole nation, and lift up all who live in their time. What Irishman does not feel proud that he has lived in the days of Grattan? Who has not turned to him for comfort from the false friends and open enemies of Ireland? who did not remember him in the days of its burnings, and wastings, and murders? No government ever dismayed him; the world could not bribe him; he thought only of Ireland—lived for no other object—dedicated to her his beautiful fancy, his elegant wit, his manly courage, and all the splendour of his astonishing eloquence. He was so born and so gifted that poetry, forensic skill, elegant literature, and all the highest attainments of human genius were within his reach; but he thought the noblest occupation of a man was to make other men happy and free, and in that straight line he went on for fifty years, without one motive in his heart which he might not have laid open to the view of God and man. He is gone, but there is not a single day of his honest life of which every good Irishman would not be more proud than of the whole political

existence of his countrymen—the annual deserters and betrayers of his native land.”

This is great but well-deserved praise, and the more to be appreciated as coming from so distinguished a man, and so honest a politician, as the celebrated Canon of St. Paul's.

May I be permitted, in conclusion, to express a hope that those who may be gifted with this wonderful power may be induced to use it, not for the purpose of personal aggrandizement, not for the furthering of private interests, but for the glorious privilege of honestly and sincerely promoting the peace and prosperity of our common country.





SHERIDAN.

BY

D. C. HERON, Q. C.





SHERIDAN.



T is difficult within the narrow compass of an hour to paint the life of any man.

How much more difficult is it in that time to give even an idea of the many-sided life of Sheridan. I must only try to give a feeble sketch of the man who wrote the best play, who spoke the best speech in the English language, and who has been adopted by cotemporaneous history and literature as the most successful type of the modern Irishman.

In considering the efforts of modern Irishmen to gain a place in oratory or literature, few consider for how short a time we have been speaking the language of Shakespeare and Milton. In Froude's History we acquire some notion of what the best type of Irish society was in the reigns of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth. The Irish nation has not been speaking the English language for one hundred and fifty years. And it is something that within that time, the genius and fire of the race have produced the crowd of wits, poets, and orators, whose works now form no inconsiderable portion of the English language. It is *still* more difficult to speak upon a

well-known theme. Sheridan was essentially an Irishman—a Dublin man. He was born in Dorset-street, and went to school in Grafton-street. His distinguished relatives live amongst us, and occupy no inconsiderable place in social life and in the literature of the world. And not the least of my difficulties is that I speak in the presence of an audience who are familiar with Sheridan's life, with Sheridan's wit, who have read the best passages of his speeches, who have seen "The School for Scandal" acted, and are fully capable of appreciating that wonderful comedy. I therefore candidly claim the indulgence of my audience. I must pass over the details of Sheridan's early life, at school, and whilst growing up to manhood. The child gave little promise of the man. In 1770 his father was living at Bath on a moderate income. And in this year Sheridan became the lover of Miss Lindley, that charmer for beauty and song, one of a nest of nightingales, and whom to see was to love. I have not time to give the names of all who adored her. Annoyed by the persecution of Captain Mathews, one of her admirers, she adopted the romantic resolution of flying secretly to France and taking refuge in a convent. Sheridan was the partner of her flight. The lady apparently changed her intentions on the journey, and the happy pair were married privately near Calais, in March, 1772.

The marriage was kept secret. Mr. Lindley followed and brought back the young lady. Two duels ensued with Captain Mathews. These duels

appear to have been most disgraceful affairs, the two combatants smashing their swords, and being allowed to scuffle about on the ground, hacking each other with the broken bits.

This was a trying time for the young Sheridan in his twenty-first year. He was utterly destitute. He had no profession. He had twice risked his life against Mathews ; but the vindication of his honour was considered most incomplete. Married,—his marriage was concealed,—he was not allowed to see his bride. And he had taken at the instance of his father an equivocal oath that he never would marry Miss Lindley. He was her husband, yet kept from every opportunity of seeing her. She was singing at Covent Garden ; and her beauty and celebrity attracted hosts of lovers. Often at this time did he disguise himself as a hackney coachman to drive her home. At length perseverance had its reward. Mr. Lindley consented, and the lovers were married a second time, in March 13, 1773. A few weeks previously he had entered his name as a student of the Middle Temple.

He at once attached himself to literature, and in 1775, the immortal play of "The Rivals," was produced at Covent Garden.

When will Sir Lucius O'Trigger be forgotten, who enters into a quarrel by expressing his difference in opinion from Captain Absolute, before the latter has spoken ; and who, when Bob Acres' courage has oozed out at the palms of his hands, insists on his fighting *Faulkland*, or any one else on the ground.

Who can forget Mrs. Malaprop and her simile "headstrong as an allegory on the banks of the Nile;" or Lydia Languish, so romantic, that she refuses to marry her lover, unless there be an eloquent without consent of friends. The moral of the play and the epilogue is that on the world's great stage woman rules. As spoken by a lady, the epilogue says:—

"One moral's plain without more fuss,
Man's social happiness all rests on us.
Through all the drama, whether damned or not;
Love gilds the scene, and woman guides the plot."

In 1776, he became with others, the purchaser of Garrick's half share in Drury-lane Theatre. The total nominal price was £35,000. Sheridan's share was £10,000. It never has been ascertained from what sources this sum was advanced by him. He certainly had not one shilling of his own.

The "Duenna" next appeared, for many years considered the best opera of the day. In 1777, "School for Scandal," was acted at Drury-lane. Sheridan was then only six-and-twenty years of age. Sheridan has often been accused of indolence. It is perfectly marvellous how often this play was written and re-written; characters, plot, names, dialog language changed.

In the note-books which Moore has epitomized, Sheridan has shown the most singular labour and patience in collecting—no doubt frequently from the gossip of the day—witty sayings, and writing and

iting them over and over again. So true it is, Nil sine magno labore Deus dedit hominibus."

No play has ever been so often acted in the theatre, so much read in the drawing-room; none has received so much analysis and criticism. We are charmed with the endless vivacity of the dialogue. Sir Peter Teazle differs from all similar characters in the English or Spanish School of dramatists, by being made a thorough old gentleman, invested with dignity, tenderness, and a perfect sense of honour. We finally forgive Lady Teazle. We forgive Joseph Surface. And we delight that Sir Peter becomes a happy husband after all his troubles.

Prosperity was now apparently smiling upon Sheridan. He was reconciled with his father, who became manager of the theatre. In 1778 he purchased Mr. Glynne's share in Drury Lane for £45,000. No one can tell how the money was procured, except by the happy art of putting the future in pawn for the supply of the present. He was now in the best London society, flattered and courted by the great and the fair. The "Critic" appeared in 1779. "Lord Orleigh" is better known by his shake of the head than many great characters upon whose speeches dramatists have lavished their genius and research through a five-act tragedy. Who can forget "Puff," and his description of the puff direct, preliminary, collateral, and conclusive. "Sneer" is remembered for his query as to the plot, "No scandal about Queen Elizabeth, I hope?"

Sheridan was now rapidly to unite the domain of politics with that of literature. He had become the friend of Fox, of Burke, of Windham. Lord John Townshend gives this remarkable account of the first meeting of Fox and Sheridan :—" The first interview I shall never forget. Fox told me, after breaking up from dinner, that he had always thought Hare—after my uncle, Charles Townshend—the wittiest man he had ever met with, but that Sheridan surpassed them both infinitely : and Sheridan told me next day that he was quite lost in admiration of Fox ; and that it was a puzzle to him to say what he admired most—his commanding superiority of talents and universal knowledge, or his playful fancy, artless manner, and benevolence of heart, which showed itself in every word he uttered." Sheridan now became a frequent and welcome guest at Devonshire House. He wrote for the *Englishman*, then the organ of the advanced Liberal party. In 1780 he was elected M.P. for Stafford. In six short years, by the mere force of genius, he had become one of the leaders of his party, and the dramatic muse was abandoned for a time.

When Sheridan entered political life the American Revolution—the greatest event in modern history—was proceeding, and was near its triumphant close. The wonderful excitement of the contest had results upon not only the politics but the literature and oratory of the day. There are no bar speeches in England or Ireland before the latter end of the eighteenth century. Parliamentary oratory in Eng-

and commences with Pitt, and Fox, and Burke, and Sheridan. The eloquence of the English bar commences with Erskine. In Ireland forensic and parliamentary history commences in 1782.

Sheridan's first speech was a failure. Woodfall used to relate the story that Sheridan, after he had spoken, came up to him in the gallery, and asked how he had done. Woodfall said, "I am sorry to say I do not think this is in your line; you had much better have stuck to your former pursuits."

On hearing this, Sheridan rested his head on his hands for a few minutes, and said, with an oath, "It's mine, and shall come out!"

Sheridan's connection with the stage was, in the commencement of his political career, a constant source of annoying sarcasm. Pitt so far forgot himself as to allude to it in the debate on the preliminary articles of peace. "No one more admired than he for the abilities of the Right Honourable Gentleman; the eloquent sallies of his thought, his dramatic turns, they were reserved for the proper *stage*, it would be his fortune — 'sui plausu gaudere theatri.'" Sheridan retorted:—"On the personality he need not make any comment. The propriety, the taste of it must have been obvious to the house. But I meet your allusion with the most sincere good humour. And ever again I engage in the compositions to which you allude, I may attempt an improvement on one of Ben Jonson's best characters—'the Angry Boy in the Alchemist.'" "

In the coalition ministry, 1783, Sheridan and Richard Burke were Secretaries to the Treasury.

The defeat of the India Bill, the annihilation of the coalition ministry, and the general election of 1784 followed. No less than 160 followers of the "coalition" lost their seats. It was a poor consolation to be called "Fox's Martyrs."

Pitt's administration was now in a state of perfect security, and apparently no topic was likely to come on the political stage either to excite party spirit, or to give an opportunity for political eloquence. But a subject now arose, combining the importance of a national question with the directness of a personal attack. The impeachment of Warren Hastings afforded Sheridan one of the opportunities rarely given by fortune, still more rarely taken advantage of by genius. For several years Edmund Burke had been working on the Indian question, but although his speeches and essays remain as monuments of eloquence and learning, they were but coldly received. One of his greatest speeches is that on the debts of the Nabob of Arcot; yet Pitt and Grenville, having heard it, discussed whether it needed a reply, and decided that it did not. While conducted mainly by Edmund Burke the prosecution languished, and apparently Warren Hastings was to retire with the honours of the contest. But marvellous was the power of Sheridan's oratory—one speech changed everything. On the 7th of February, 1787, he delivered in the House of Commons the speech on the Begum Princesses of Oude. Its effect upon the

audience had no parallel in history. Burke declared it to be "the most astonishing effort of eloquence, argument, and wit united, of which there was any record or tradition." Fox said, "all that he had ever heard, all that he had ever read, when compared with it, dwindled into nothing, and vanished like vapour before the sun." Pitt acknowledged "that it surpassed all the eloquence of ancient and modern times, and possessed everything that genius or art could furnish to agitate and control the human mind." There is no report of this speech. Sheridan was asked to try and furnish one, but he contented himself with leaving to imagination the task of justifying the eulogies he obtained. Sheridan's second great speech, as manager of the impeachment, was delivered in Westminster Hall, and lasted four days. I do not attempt to give any passages of the speech, but I repeat Burke's eulogium:—"Of all the various species of oratory, of every kind of eloquence that had been heard, either in ancient or modern times, whatever the acuteness of the Bar, the dignity of the Senate, or the morality of the Pulpit could furnish, had not been equal to what that House had that day heard in Westminster Hall." When Sheridan delivered this speech he was thirty-six years of age. The short-hand report of this second speech is in existence, and Moore has quoted many passages from it. We have no time to read them to-day, nor do I think it possible for a verbatim report of a successful speech to read well. In speaking there must be repetition—there must be the connecting

links of thought—there must be many superfluities, which, at the moment they are heard, assist the orator, and are the delight of the audience. But these very repetitions annoy the reader. For reading, the style of Sallust or of Tacitus is the best. The orator must be content with fame, that rests upon little that can be tested by posterity. Words fresh from the brain, spoken with the impress of thought upon them, delight the audience, but often read cold, tame, and laboured. Sheridan's fortunes culminated to the highest point this year. He was acknowledged to be the first orator of the age. Pecuniary difficulties had not yet appeared prominently. He had a happy home. He was loved by all within his own circle, and enjoyed the best London society.

The consequences of the great American Revolution now began to appear. The French Revolution was now commencing. Old institutions were crumbling into dust. The great problems of the natural rights of man seemed about to be solved. A career open to talent was demanded by the unemployed and the ambitious. Liberty of action, equality of rights, fraternity of nations, became the watchwords of the struggle on the one side. Nor in our day is the struggle over. But the most distinguished advocate on the popular side, was now to leave the popular side for ever; and Edmund Burke turned against the French Revolution the whole force of his grand intellect. Burke's writings from this time contradict the whole of his former life, and he became in politics as violent a Tory as he had been

hitherto a Whig. It was during the session of 1790 that Burke in the House of Commons first publicly began to secede from his party. In a discussion on the Army Estimates he declared, that so strongly opposed was he to any—the least—tendency towards the means of introducing a democracy like that of the French, as well as to the end itself, that if any friend of his could concur in such measures, he would abandon his best friends and join with his worst enemies to oppose either the means or the end. Fox replied with moderation. He said he was averse to all extremes, and concluded by the memorable compliment to Burke, that if he were to put all the political information he had gained from books, from science, and from knowledge of the world on the one side, and the improvement which he had derived from his Right Honourable Friend's instruction and conversation on the other, he would be at a loss to decide to which to give the preference. The scene would have passed over had not Sheridan declared his difference with Burke. He conceived the French Revolution to be as just as the English Revolution had been. He defended the national Assembly. He could not understand the charge of their having overthrown the laws, the justice, and the revenues of the country. Their laws, said Sheridan, were capricious despotism—their justice, the partial adjudications of venal magistrates—their revenues were national bankruptcy. Edmund Burke retorted angrily and declared, that he and Sheridan were henceforth separated in politics. In May, 1791,

the celebrated scene occurred in the House when Burke declared his friendship with Fox was at an end for ever.

The first real trouble of life was now to fall upon Sheridan. Debts and difficulties did not make him unhappy. I do not think the rupture with Edmund Burke affected him much. Sheridan had used desperate language to Burke, and had called him a deserter and spy. But in the year 1792, Mrs. Sheridan died of consumption, in the 38th year of her age. By all contemporaneous accounts, never was there a more beautiful and accomplished person. But the devotion with which she was regarded by her sisters and by her husband's own family, the Sheridans and the Le Fanus in Dublin, showed that her fascination was of that best kind which, like charity, begins at home. The letters between her and Mrs. Le Fanu are a most charming record of true friendship. With earnest sympathy she followed her husband through his various pursuits. Love attended Genius as a servant. A wife of a Dramatist and Manager—she calculated the receipts of the house—assisted in adapting the music of the operas—read over the plays sent in for the stage. Volumes of her handwriting have remained to attest the labour with which she assisted in copying papers, pamphlets, extracts, all the miscellaneous details from which the speeches of the Orator were composed. The affectionate care with which she watched over her children finishes this charming picture of

domestic life. Her loss to Sheridan was the commencement of ruin.

The following years passed rapidly over. The war with France begun in 1793. The secession of Burke and his friends from the Whig party had the result of giving for years uncontrolled power to Mr. Pitt. Meantime Sheridan worked on. Sheridan's life was the only one that ever combined that of an orator and statesman, with that of a dramatist and theatrical manager. He lived for Parliament, but also for the stage. The succeeding years are crowded with events. Napoleon rose to the height of power. Pitt and Fox passed away from the world.

Although the sayings of Sheridan are so well known it is impossible not to refer to some of them to-day. In his speech against Warren Hastings, he said—"If you peruse the annals of Tacitus, or read the luminous page of Gibbon, you will not find an act of treacherous cruelty to exceed this." At the conclusion of the speech a Whig friend asked how he came to compliment Gibbon with the epithet luminous. "My dear fellow," said Sheridan, "I said voluminous." A noble lord, with a solemn face, having heard a good anecdote from Sheridan, said—"That's very good, I'll go and tell that to our friend instanter." "For God's sake, don't," said Sheridan, "a joke in your mouth is no laughing matter."

He never had the slightest scruple in appropriating the witty sayings of the day, improving, polishing, and passing them off as his own. As he was walking down to the House with Sir Philip

Francis, on the day when the address of thanks on the peace was moved, Sir Philip Francis observed it was a peace which everyone would be glad of, but no one would be proud of. Sheridan did not appear to attend to the observation, but hurried to the House, made a short speech, in which he said—"Sir, this is a peace which every one will be glad of, but no one can be proud of." In the same way he was indebted to Sir Arthur Pigott for the observation, that half the debt of England had been incurred in pulling down the Bourbons, and the other half in setting them up. Wit produces wit, and Sheridan met with some good retorts. In speaking at the Westminster election, addressing the mob, he was promising to give his opponents a check. "Oh, d— your checks Sherry," said a man in the crowd, "they're worth nothing." On the re-opening of Drury Lane, Whitbread had written an address in which, like the other addresses, there are many allusions to the Phoenix. "But," said Sheridan, "Whitbread made more of this bird than any of them; he entered into particulars, and described its wings, beak, and tail; in short it was a Poulterer's description of a Phoenix." One night coming late out of a tavern, he fell, heavily intoxicated. Being raised by some passengers and asked his name and address, he referred to a coffee-house, and said—"Gentlemen, I am not often this way—my name is Wilberforce."

Dining with Lord Thurlow, the Chancellor gave only one bottle of constantia; Sheridan liked it extremely and wanted another. The Chancellor

thought he had given enough of constantia. Sheridan then turned to the gentleman beside him, and said—"Sir, pass me that decanter ; for I must return to Madeira, since I cannot double the Cape."

As regards the subject we are considering, the happiness of Sheridan's life was over ; debts and troubles were gathering fast. His fine features became disfigured with intemperance. It is most painful to look at Gillray's caricatures of him. He was now going fast down the hill.

On the 24th of February, 1809, during the debate on the war with Spain, the House was illuminated with a blaze of light—Drury Lane theatre was on fire. Sheridan left the house, and with most wonderful fortitude witnessed the destruction of his property. He sat at the Piazza Coffee-house, took some refreshment ; and a friend, remarking to him how calmly he bore the ruin, Sheridan said—"Surely a man may take a glass of wine at his own fireside."

Sheridan's political career was now fast drawing to a close. Almost the last words he uttered in the House were—"In fine, I think the situation of Ireland a paramount consideration. If they were to be the last words I should ever utter in this House, I should say, Be just to Ireland, as you value your own honour. Be just to Ireland as you value your own peace." In 1812 Sheridan had lost both Parliament and the theatre—the two places for which and in which he lived. Debts and troubles were gathering fast, and the fatal habit of intoxica-

tion gained complete control. He had some excuses He might have said with Captain Morris—

“ Since many a lad I loved is dead,
 And many a lass grown old ;
 And when the reason strikes my head,
 My weary heart grows cold.

But through the glass’s magic glare,
 These evils seem less plain ;
 And that I think a reason fair
 To fill my glass again.”

Moore tells us of having seen him in these years and that in private society, before the rubicon of the cup was passed, he still justified his reputation for wit. Actual beggary now came upon him. His splendid books were pawned. The presentation plate vanished. His pictures, including that of his wife as Saint Cecilia, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, were sold. Writs and executions swept away everything. Moore gives some of his letters during these fatal times—“ I am utterly undone and broken-hearted. They are going to put the carpets out of the window, and break into Mrs. S.’s room and take me. For God’s sake let me see you. R. B. S.” He was dying Moore states, that with rare exceptions none of his noble or royal friends ever called at his door, or even sent to inquire after him. He was arrested at his deathbed, but was left in the house. A few days before his death a striking article appeared in the *Morning Post*—“ Oh ! delay not to draw aside the curtain within which that proud spirit hides it

sufferings. Prefer ministering in the chamber of sickness, to mustering at the splendid sorrows that adorn the hearse. I say life and succour against Westminster Abbey and a funeral." The small relief then given, was too late. Death ended his sorrows on the 7th July, 1816. He had a public funeral attended by royal and noble friends, who had utterly forgotten him whilst he was dying, almost without the necessaries of life. It has been well remarked in reference to Sheridan's death and funeral—"France was the place for a man of letters to live in, England the place to die in."

Moore wrote the celebrated satire on the death of Sheridan—

"Oh ! it sickens the heart to see bosoms so hollow,
 And friendships so false in the great and high-born ;
 To think what a long line of titles may follow
 The relics of him who died friendless and lorn.

How proud they can press to the funeral array
 Of him whom they spurn'd in his sickness and sorrow !
 How bailiffs may seize his last blanket to-day,
 Whose pall shall be held up by princes to-morrow.

Was this then the fate of that high-gifted man—
 The pride of the palace, the bower, and the hall ;
 The orator, dramatist, minstrel ; who ran
 Through each mode of the lyre and was master of all.

Whose eloquence, brightening whatever it tried—
 Whether reason or fancy, the gay or the grave,
 Was as rapid, as deep, and as brilliant a tide,
 As ever bore freedom aloft on its wave."

I have avoided going into any of the details of

Sheridan's abandonment by the Prince Regent, and the brilliant society in which he once moved. Bitter controversies still exist on the subject. But let the eulogy of Moore be remembered—"Had Sheridan been less consistent and disinterested in his public conduct, he might have commanded the means of living independently and respectably in private. He might have died a rich apostate, instead of closing a life of patriotism in beggary. He might have hid his head in a coronet, instead of earning for it but the barren wreath of public gratitude. While therefore we admire the great sacrifice that he made, let us be tolerant to the errors and imprudences that it entailed upon him; and recollecting how vain it is to look for anything unalloyed in this world, rest satisfied with the martyr without requiring also the saint."

I may be permitted to add, that however difficult it may be for genius to be controlled by prudence, yet all the misery, destitution, despair of Sheridan's closing years were caused mainly by want of ordinary prudence. He achieved a splendid success as a dramatist. Drury-lane was for years most profitable. He shared in the temporary prosperity of his party. But his extravagance was unbounded. And from the first purchase of the share in Drury-lane, he was never out of debt. I do not wish to encourage avarice. Money should be acquired—

"Not for to hide it in a hedge,
Not for a train attendant;
But for the glorious privilege
Of being independent."

The end of life is happiness. And many a brilliant Irishman has had the example of Sheridan as a beacon before him. But it may be, as I have said, that caution and calculation were impossible to be combined with the other qualities existing in Sheridan's character. Let us then forgive him his errors. 'For them no man ever suffered more. Let us remember what he was and what he did. Most unfortunately for his memory his last and least happy moments are those best remembered. He has been regarded merely as a brilliant ornament of society; or, like Captain Morris, a mere boon companion. Yet, in his own time, and on the grand stage of cotemporaneous history, he was acknowledged by the great personages who lived in his presence as their superior in all the qualities most prized in life. His comedies almost alone remain of his works. Yet in my opinion they give a very inadequate idea of his powers. His life was a wonderful romance. He lived in an age of excitement, of which we can form no idea. He was the most eloquent, most active, and most fascinating of the great men who have inscribed their names for ever on that page of history. In every parliamentary debate for twenty years he was a leader. He pronounced an influential opinion on every subject. His glorious voice was the trumpet of a great party; and gave no uncertain sound. And through prosperity and adversity he supported a cause which brought with it no worldly emoluments, and which if he had abandoned he was secure of a pension and a peerage. Grace of

manner, charm of voice, fluency of language, brilliancy of sarcasm, felicity of statement were all his. Truly was he one of "the heroes and chiefs of the eloquent war." The more we read of him—the more we study him, so much the more do we admire and love RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.



ROMEO AND JULIET.

BY

REV. E. WHATELY, A.M.





ROMEO AND JULIET.

WHEN we compare Shakespeare's plays one with another, it is difficult (for the most part) to decide their relative merits, because they are all of them (with a few exceptions) perfect in their own line. The utmost therefore, we can do in such a case is to consider which of them has taken the highest line. Now, when viewed in this light, I suppose it will be generally admitted that "Romeo and Juliet" does not deserve to occupy the first position among Shakespeare's tragedies. We could not place it altogether on a level with "Hamlet," "Macbeth," "Lear," or "Othello." It does not possess the grandeur, the elevation, the sublimity of horror which characterize these last-mentioned plays. But if it be inferior to them in these respects, it is superior to them all, in *pathos*, in unity of design, and in the subordination of *interest*, *characters*, and *incidents* to the one great master-passion. Therefore, in its own line it may, perhaps, be considered the most complete of all.

It does not profess to be anything more than a love story, but it is of all love stories, the most per-

fect, as well as the most touching. Everything contributes to this perfection—the scene in which the story is laid—the characters of the lovers—the incidents—and the manner in which the plot is conducted, and the catastrophe brought about. As we are engaged in a work of analytical investigation, it may be not unusitabale to show how entirely this assertion is confirmed by fact. But, first, I cannot help observing that Shakespeare, in his choice of materials, presents a favourable contrast to some modern authors, who seek to vary the monotony of the ordinary routine of love and courtship, and to show their power, by endeavouring to extract beauty out of unlovely materials. Thus they will sometimes bestow upon their hero or heroine an unprepossessing exterior, or they will represent one of them as being no longer young ; or they will choose them out of a class of persons who, either from their *habits*, their *occupation*, or from other circumstances, have been connected in most minds, with unpoetical and unromantic associations ; or they will endow them with qualities which are rather of a repulsive character. Now this endeavour to gather grapes off thorns, &c., even though it may to a certain extent succeed, involves a waste of power ; and when it does succeed, it reminds us of those difficult musical performances, respecting which Dr. S. Johnson said, that he only wished they were impossible, such as playing “God save the King,” on a single string, &c. Perhaps, in these days, such attempts may be more excusable, from the fact that the public is constantly craving

for something new, and that in order to gratify this craving, it is necessary that an author should sometimes leave the beaten track, even though in so doing he may be compelled to violate the rules of strict good taste. Besides, it may not only be allowable, but useful, for the writer of fiction occasionally to teach his readers that there are gems of beauty which lie hid, "not only in the dark unfathomed caves of ocean," but also in the dusty high road and in muddy pools. Still, we must confess, that where the subject is a love story, it is rather painful to see the author groping in the dirt in order to find these gems. At all events, without censuring those writers who take such a course, we cannot help rejoicing that Shakespeare has attempted nothing of this sort, but, on the contrary, has (as we have already pointed out) gathered together all the most promising materials which he could select for his story. He has made his hero and heroine young, beautiful, loving, innocent, and faithful even to death. There are no repulsive traits in their character, no discordant notes in their hearts; but, like the language of that land to which they belong, every chord in those hearts is musical, and is attuned to the one emotion which forms the *key-note* of their being—their mutual love. Even those defects which I shall shortly have to notice in them, and which render them imperfect as individuals, contribute to their perfection as lovers. Then, again, as regards the place which he has selected for the scene of the play, Shakespeare is equally fortunate. He has chosen a country to

which Byron's description of Clarens, in Switzerland, eminently apply—

“Birth place of deep love,
Thine air is the young breath of passionate thought,
Thy trees take root in love.”

Every one who has visited, Italy must feel how well the surrounding scenery, together with other adjuncts peculiar to that country is (when memory enables us to picture them) calculated to enhance the beauty of the balcony scene, where Juliet makes her first confession of love. The clear sky, the balmy air of an Italian evening, through the medium of which the accents of love, uttered in the most melodious of all modern languages, came mellowed and softened; the calm moonlight, shining through the clear southern atmosphere, and the peculiar kind of beauty which characterizes an Italian garden—a beauty most especially appropriate to that country.

Indeed, whether or not it be from an association of ideas, I cannot help thinking that not only the history and character of the Italian people, but also the scenery of Italy, render that country the most appropriate site for the introduction of a story of passionate love, ending in death, and interspersed with private feuds and scenes of slaughter. Without going so far as to assert that the story of Romeo and Juliet would have appeared unnatural to us, had the scene of it been originally laid in England, we cannot but feel, that once laid in Italy, if it could be transferred to our own country, all the incidents, as

as the whole tone and tenor of the drama, would comparatively uncongenial to the character, scenery, and scenery of the land in which they were acted. They would excite in us a sense of incongruity, similar to that which is produced (in some cases at least) by the introduction of an Italian garden into England, where the laurels are cut into a miserable imitation of orange trees and the yew presses, and where the urns and statues seem to lie on their marble pedestals, beneath the dark, foggy atmosphere of our northern climate. And there are other incongruities than those produced by the uncongeniality of climate, and difference in vegetable productions, which, while I am on the subject I cannot forbear mentioning. An Italian garden, partly from association, and partly perhaps from its own peculiar character, suggests ideas which are essentially anti-English. Its marble terraces, gravel walks, planted on either side, and not as in our own gardens, winding round intersecting flower beds, but leaving a wide space for the imagination to fill up;—all these characteristic features, added to the associations of history, make us feel, when visiting such spots, as if there were a gap to be filled up, and as if the peculiar features of the scenery which we see around us, would be in a measure wasted, unless we could not make them the scene of some romantic story, with a considerable infusion of tragedy—such tragedy as belongs more to the scenery and habits of the Italian than of the English nation. Far different are the feelings excited by an English garden. I am not here speaking of

the country seats of our nobility, in which foreign elements are often blended with English,—and not disadvantageously,—for these possess a character, as they also probably possess a history, peculiar to themselves. I am now speaking of the ordinary English garden. Its roses and its jasmines may indeed suggest the idea of love ; but it is not the intoxicating love which is breathed by the orange and myrtle ; it is a calm love, true but gentle, and deep, rather than passionate. Its carefully tended walks, and its beds luxuriant with annuals—the church spire peeping through the trees, and the clear chime of sabbath bells, or the hum of noon-tide bees—all speak of domestic life, of the cares of a household, and the cheerful prattle of children.

Let there be the prerogativity of Britain, and let us not scruple to concede to Italy the beautiful but undesirable empire of romance, especially that kind of romance which belongs to such a drama as that of “Romeo and Juliet.” Wisely, therefore, has Shakespeare selected that country for the scene of this his only love tragedy. Equally happy is he in respect of the manner in which the plot is conducted, its incidents all tending, (as I before remarked), to bring about the tragic catastrophe, and everything giving way to the great master-passion. Indeed what Coleridge says of human nature in general, may be safely affirmed of this play—

“ All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs the human frame,
Are but the ministers of love
And feed its sacred flame.”

In most of Shakespeare's other tragedies, and to a great extent even in this one, there is a singular mixture of the grave and gay—of the facetious and the melancholy, the lively and the terrible ; indeed, I believe there is scarcely any other tragedian (with the exception of Euripides) who has ventured to blend together these incongruous elements to the same extent. But however such a combination may offend those minds which are tied up with the red tape of official routine, and who would tell us that tragedy is tragedy, and comedy comedy, it cannot be denied that Shakespeare is more true to nature when he mixes the two together, than he would be, if he kept them separate. Real life is chequered ; and even the most melancholy and tragic years in our existence, would, if all their incidents were to be faithfully recorded, be found to contain much which was lively and facetious.

It must, however, be confessed that the frequent admixture of lively or comic elements, together with the introduction of intersecting interests, (both of which are common in Shakespeare,) must (at all events in the case of a less powerful writer) not only diminish the solemnity, but lessen the depth and weaken the pathos of the tragedy. Perhaps, therefore, it may be said (without any disparagement to Shakespeare's other tragedies) that *Romeo and Juliet* owes some of its power over our feelings, to the fact, that the author has (in the latter portion of this play) adopted a different course to that which he frequently pursues. There are no

intersecting interests, except in the earlier scenes; and though in those scenes, we certainly do meet with a great deal which is lively and facetious, these lighter scenes gradually cease as the passion deepens; and therefore their tendency is not so much to weaken the subsequent pathos, as to prepare our minds to bear it, just as the high spirits and thoughtless gaiety of early youth tend to fortify us against the trials of after life, and enable us better to attend to its business and to bear its crosses. What the King of Brentford said to his fellow-king, in the tragedy rehearsed, though facetiously expressed, seems to embody a principle in which there is some sense :—

“ Come now to serious counsel let ’s advance,
I do agree, but first let ’s have a dance.”

Thus we regard the lively loquacity of *Mercutio* as a sort of relief to the passionate earnestness of *Romeo*, and as a preparation for the melancholy events that are to follow. But it would never have answered, for us to have had his company throughout the whole play. It has been truly remarked, that if *Tybalt* had not killed *Mercutio*, *Mercutio* would have killed *Romeo*—he would have overpowered him. The nurse presents somewhat of the same kind of contrast to *Juliet* that *Mercutio* does to *Romeo*. But *Juliet*’s character does not require so powerful a foil as that of *Romeo*. Though her passion is (relatively to her nature) nearly equal in strength to his, the earnestness of it is somewhat

relieved by the childishness of her disposition ; and in accordance with this difference, the mirthfulness of the nurse is less continuous, and therefore we can endure her company for a longer period. From her we have occasional glimpses of cheerfulness even amid the darker scenes of the play. But these livelier touches appear (as I before remarked) gradually to cease as the plot thickens. The great master-passion gradually bears down every extraneous interest and every foreign element, and rushes on, after the manner of a mighty torrent, until at last, like the sacred river in Kublah Khan,

“It sinks in tumult to a lifeless ocean.”

Such, then, are the general elements of interest which, under the skilful hand of Shakespeare, have given to this play its absorbing interest and its powerful hold upon our feelings.

We must now proceed to consider separately the respective characters of the two lovers. We will commence with that of Juliet. She belongs to a certain class of women, of which we have, besides herself, four specimens in Shakespeare; *i. e.* Miranda, Imogene, Desdemona, and Ophelia. In all these personages the characteristic feature, and the feature which they possess in common with each other, is, an exuberance of womanhood. They are all (in their different ways) *beau ideals*—not merely of women, but of womanhood. Now, it is worthy of remark, that this kind of encomium (for such it certainly is) could not be bestowed with equal propriety

on male characters. When we contemplate the character of a man, however much that character displays of manliness, the prominent idea which presents itself to our minds is not so much his manhood, (considered as a mere abstract quality,) as the subject-matter upon which that manhood works. Thus, the patriot, the statesman, the martyr, or the philosopher, though they may all be (in their different ways) specimens of manhood, do not seem to form one class, at least not to the same extent that women do, whose characteristic is womanhood; and this difference arises from the fact that man's sphere lies more in the outer and visible world—woman's in the inner and hidden world. And hence it arises that those female characters of Shakespeare which I have just enumerated, possess a sisterly resemblance, arising from an exuberance of womanhood, which external differences, resulting from their circumstances, *i.e.* their respective ages, their temperament, &c., cannot obliterate. "*Facies non omnibus una nec diversa tamen qualem Decet esse sororum.*" Without pretending to define accurately all the slight modifications of character which distinguish them, we should say that Ophelia represents tenderness; Miranda, maiden innocence and purity; Imogene, fidelity; Desdemona, devotion. Now all these are only so many different phases of the same spirit of womanhood, subjected to different influences. Imogene and Desdemona are married women, and are placed in circumstances where the fidelity of the one and the devotion of the other is especially

tried. Ophelia differs from Juliet, owing to the fact that in the first place she appears to be older; secondly, that she belongs to a nation the inhabitants of which are of a colder temperament than the Italians.

That loving nature, which in Juliet exhibits itself in passionate attachment, appears, in the case of Ophelia, in the form of a general tenderness,—more diffused and less concentrated. Miranda, though she is even more ignorant of the world than Juliet, is apparently, like Ophelia, older than her, and her character has been rendered more serious and dignified by being subjected to influences of an opposite tendency. Her only companion was her father, a man of grave and rather solemn cast of mind, who was continually engaged in mystic studies. Juliet, on the other hand, owes the principal part of her education to her nurse, whose influence tended, probably, to develop her on one point, and to leave her a child in all others.

Judging from the general character of this woman, we should conjecture that she had always done her best to make her pupil helpless and dependent; and her conversation, which, from the specimens we have of it, would appear to have been anything but edifying, had probably the effect of awakening the passions and sensibilities of Juliet, while it left her reason asleep. Thus the poor woman, without being aware of it, educated her young charge in the very way which was most calculated to bring about the ruin of her happiness; for such an education was

like placing a person on a runaway horse, without giving them bit or bridle to rein it in. It is remarkable, however, that this very combination of childish innocence, ignorance and want of self-control, with the sensibilities of a full-grown and passionate woman, which was so fatal to her happiness, is just what invests her character with its peculiar charm, and gives it a far stronger claim on our interest than it would otherwise possess. The mind delights in contrasts, and here we have a legitimate contrast arising from a combination of qualities, the union of which, though not at all unnatural, is nevertheless unexpected, and excites in us an agreeable feeling of surprise.

It is this continual contrast which gives a peculiar piquancy to the character of Juliet; and moreover the two qualities which we have noticed as forming this contrast, act favourably on one another, at least as far as external beauty is concerned. Her depth of passion relieves her childishness from insipidity; while, on the other hand, that same childish nature—comprising as it does the *excellencies* as well as the *weaknesses* of childhood, *i.e.* the confiding innocence of that period of life, as well its ignorance and want of self-control—gives a purity and beauty to her passion, and covers with a veil of modesty those open and ready confessions of love which might otherwise appear unbecoming in a woman. In the balcony scene she has the additional excuse of having been overheard in what she had never intended for her lover's ear; and this indeed, added to her own

beautiful apology for herself, is (on the occasion referred to) a sufficient exculpation from the charge of unmaidenly boldness. But it must be allowed, that in the general tenor of her conversation there is a want of that reserve which is usually considered seemly in young maidens. This, however, results not from forwardness or want of modesty, but from the fact that, like a child, she does not understand the art of concealment, and being conscious of no feeling which is not innocent, does not even see the necessity for it. In this respect she resembles Miranda; and both of them are led, by this disposition, into conduct which, when judged by the standard of worldly prudence, would not be considered wise. But yet I am not sure whether it is not more in accordance, both with poetical justice and with probability, to represent such characters as fortunate in their choice, than to represent them as deceived and betrayed. For as in young children, there is often an instinct which tells them whom they may trust, and whom they ought to love, so in very child-like, innocent, and inexperienced women, there may be a similar instinct which would not allow them to put themselves into the power of a man who would abuse that power. At the same time we should not advise any woman to follow the example of Juliet or of Miranda, who did not stand exactly in their position. When once we have tasted of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, (I do not mean by being guilty of any transgression of the laws of morality,) but merely by im-

bibing that amount of experience which in these days all must acquire who have arrived at the age of puberty, then, however much we may pique ourselves on our guilelessness and purity of thought and life, it is in vain for us to try and go back to the paradisaical state, where mere instinct is a safe guide. Let instinct have its due weight in your decisions, but let it go hand in hand with reason.

But to return to Juliet. There is one remaining feature in her character which we have not yet noticed, which forms an additional element of beauty in it, and which is in exact harmony with her childlike disposition. I mean the entire absence of conventionalism; in this respect Romeo resembles her. They have neither of them formed their characters as lovers, upon the model of any persons whom they had seen; nor have they extracted their love-phrases out of books. Nothing which they say comes second-hand; and therefore we can tolerate in them such an amount of love-making and love-speeches, as would be unbearable, if it had the slightest odour either of the ball-room or of the circulating library. To recapitulate, then, what we have said; the chief elements of which Juliet's character consists, are a childish and childlike disposition, united with the susceptibilities of a loving and passionate woman. Her childishness is beautifully exhibited in some of those fine touches, so common in Shakespeare, and which are almost too delicate to have been the result of design—*e.g.*, in her childish

impatience to receive Romeo's message from her nurse, and again, in the manner in which she abuses him when she hears that he has killed Tybalt, and then suddenly changes, when her sentiments are echoed by the nurse, and exclaims—

“ Blistered be thy tongue for such a wish.”

There is, however, it must be confessed, one point in which she seems inconsistent. Though the cast of her mind is essentially childish, yet the manner in which she expresses her ideas, and some of the ideas themselves, are those of a fully developed, an educated, and a reflective woman. But if this be an error, it is one which is shared with most of Shakespeare's characters. For (if we recollect rightly) there is scarcely one of them whose conversation is not superior to that of the ordinary run of mankind. Indeed if every man really spoke as they do, we should gain more from the social intercourse of a single evening, than we generally do from that of a whole year. But we can readily pardon a fault which has filled our language with household words, and supplied us with aphorisms which apply to almost every phase of human life.

Now as regards the peculiar defect of Juliet's character. What that defect was may be gathered from the description first given of her. But we must further show how this defect became, by the line of conduct which it produced, instrumental in effecting her ruin. This judicial arrangement of events is common to all Shakespeare's tragedies,

even to those in which, as in the one before us, we are called upon to pity and even to admire the sufferers. In such cases, Shakespeare does not, as an inferior writer might do, endeavour to enhance our sympathies with the misfortunes of his heroes and heroines, by representing those misfortunes as entirely undeserved, and merely the result of untoward circumstances or the malice of enemies. No; in some of his chief tragedies the fate of the principal actors may be ascribed, partly indeed to the above-named causes, and partly to some fault or weakness in their own disposition and conduct, which, though not sufficient materially to lessen our pity for their fate, renders that fate just sufficiently deserved to prevent our feelings of poetical justice from being violated. And such a representation is true to nature; for in real life, those whose conduct entails the greatest misfortunes on themselves, are not, on the one hand, the cold and heartless disciples of the world, nor on the other, the men of undeviating rectitude of purpose and action; but men with large hearts and noble sentiments, but strong passions—men who have not sufficient ballast of character to pursue steadily either the right or the expedient course; persons of this stamp are often led into misfortunes, which a little less heart on the one hand, and a little more self-control on the other, might have averted, and thus their virtues and their faults combine in effecting their ruin. Such is just what Shakespeare has represented as a combination of faults and virtues in the case of Leah, of Hamlet,

of Othello, and of Romeo and Juliet, as instrumental in bringing about the final catastrophe ; but we must confine our observations to the last-mentioned play. Juliet's peculiar weakness consists in a want of that womanly self-control which, in her case, was doubly necessary, in order to restrain a passionate nature. At the same time we must confess we are in some doubt how far to ascribe the two false steps which she takes, *i.e.* her hasty marriage, and her subsequent suicide, to this cause, and how far to the operation of an unsound principle, which we know has been entertained by some women, that they are bound to sacrifice everything,—even duty and filial obedience,—to love. Perhaps her conduct may be ascribed to both causes. At all events, whatever were the causes which led to it, the conduct was wrong. Nothing can really justify an act of filial impiety, however much romance may dress up such an action in its own gaudy colours. Juliet had no right (while she was in a state of legal infancy) to marry without the consent of her parents. There is, indeed, great excuse for her conduct—her youth, her inexperience, her early education, and, above all, the connivance of the Friar, (who was old enough and wise enough to know better,) at an act which he ought to have used his influence in opposing ; all these circumstances recommend her strongly to mercy. But, unfortunately, tragedy, *i.e.* really deep, pathetic tragedy, though it may and ought to be just, to a certain extent, cannot be merciful.

It is not, however, through the fault of Juliet alone,

that the final catastrophe is brought about. That catastrophe is owing partly to unforeseen circumstances, and partly to the fault of Romeo—a fault which arose from a natural weakness in his disposition. What that weakness consisted in we shall presently show. But we must first take a general survey of his character, commencing with praise, and concluding with a certain amount of censure.

Romeo, whatever he may be as a man, is perfect as a lover. His love is faithful, tender, unartificial, and exquisitely graceful and refined. There is such an indescribable fascination about him, that when we add to his other attractions the additional one of personal beauty, which Shakspeare has ascribed to him, we can almost pardon Juliet for making an idol of him. Indeed of the two lovers he is, perhaps, the more attractive.

Hazlitt has described Romeo by saying, that he is “Hamlet in love.” And this description is to a certain extent a correct one; but yet it is very like saying, “If my aunt had been a man she would have been by uncle.” Both Romeo and Hamlet (as Hazlitt remarks) live in an ideal world of their own; but here the resemblance ends. Hamlet’s world is a world of thought, Romeo’s of feeling; and it is impossible, from the constitution of his mind, that Hamlet could have loved as Romeo did. He does indeed love Ophelia, but not as Romeo loves Juliet. It may be said, that the circumstances by which he was surrounded were unpropitious to love. These were of a painfully distracting nature,

and calculated to draw his thoughts and passions into a different channel. But under *no* circumstances, was Hamlet's nature capable of being absorbed in the love of any individual, were they man or woman. He would never have said, as Romeo says, "Hang up philosophy unless philosophy can make a Juliet." With Romeo love is not an episode in his existence, but an inseparable part of it. Romeo out of love, is almost a contradiction in terms. It is difficult, therefore, even in imagination, to contemplate his character apart from his love. But if we must do so, we should say that its distinguishing features were, a susceptible temperament, and an ardent imagination, which, combined together, would naturally lead him not only to exaggerate, mentally, the goods and ills of life, but to feel both the one and the other more strongly than other men. But in point of fact, a separation between Romeo and his love can only be made in the imagination—in reality the two must have been inseparable companions. Shakespeare was wise when he introduced him to us, not as one who was *about* to fall in love, but as one who was already in love. To introduce Rosalind, instead of Juliet, as Romeo's first love, is indeed one of those bold strokes which Shakespeare occasionally indulges in; and I believe some persons would, if they dared, censure it as a piece of bad taste, and would further censure as unnatural, the sudden and entire transference of his affections from one object to another. But I have a strong idea that Shakespeare was right on

both these points. It is totally impossible that a character like Romeo should have arrived at the age of puberty without falling in love. Then as regards the transference of his affections, some have endeavoured to account for this, by saying that Juliet eclipses Rosalind as the sun eclipses the moon. But we do not consider this to be a true account of the matter. For in reality, Rosalind and Juliet do not stand to each other in the relation of sun and moon, (as far as Romeo is concerned,) but of shadow and substance. Rosalind was the *shadow*, Juliet the *substance*. In the case of Rosalind, the object was created by Romeo's susceptibility of temperament, and disposition to love ; in that of Juliet, it was the object which created the love ; and we cannot wonder if that which was unreal, should immediately give way to that which was real. Had Rosalind favoured Romeo's addresses, his love for her would in all probability have become real ; as it was, it must have been little more than a *desire* to love, which I believe is a true description of a great deal of what is generally designated by the name of that passion.

Such, then, being the real state of the case, it follows that Romeo's love, instead of having exhausted itself on a previous object, is better prepared by that object for the formation of a new attachment, and the depth of his love for Juliet is in some measure the result of his former disappointment. But his love for her is not only *deep*, it is *wide*, and all-embracing ; it swallows up every other

feeling and interest. The whole of the world, the whole of life, reflects for him but one image—that of Juliet; and had he heard the pretty though childishly fanciful wish which she expresses concerning him, that when he is dead he should be “cut out into little stars in order to make the face of heaven more bright,” he might have answered in the words of a verse which has been ascribed to Plato—“Then every star should be an eye to gaze upon thy beauties’ here.”

The effect which this concentration of feeling produces on his intellect is worth remarking. If we judge of him by the ideas which he expresses, and the language in which he clothes those ideas, ascribing these to himself, and not (as we must do in the case of Juliet if we would preserve her consistency of character) to Shakespeare, we should say that he was naturally a man of considerable parts, and that whatever intellect he possessed, was strengthened in respect of the subject-matter on which it was exercised, by being concentrated into one focus, and kindled into warmth and life by the flame which inspired it, so that it became perfect in the one province to which it was confined, *i.e.* the poetry of love.

There is another small trait of character which Romeo exhibits, and which is also worth noting, and that is his presentiment of coming evil. This is in accordance with the dreamy character of his mind. For those who live in a world of dreams must expect to find that world haunted by phantoms of the

future, some of them real, some imaginary, which, owing to the peculiar constitution of their mind, they have not the strength to combat.

We must now consider what is the peculiar defect in Romeo's character. This, I think, the description which we have just given of him sufficiently shows; but it may be summed up in these few words. He loves like a woman and not like a man. We do not (when we say this) mean to imply that he is altogether an effeminate character—far from it; if he were so, he would not possess the peculiar fascination which he does. We mean neither more nor less than what we have said.

But in order to make ourselves more clearly understood, we must digress a little from our subject, and endeavour to show what is the peculiar difference between man and woman's love. The distinction we shall make will not be an invidious one, for it implies a difference in *kind* rather than in *degree*. In Miss Austin's novel of "Persuasion," there is a conversation between the heroine and a naval officer, which bears upon this subject, and one passage of which I shall quote; though I am well aware that in so doing I shall be guilty of injustice towards the authoress, for you ought to have read the whole conversation from which the passage is extracted, and indeed the whole novel, in order to appreciate it fully. When the gentleman has eloquently pleaded the cause of his sex in respect of the strength of their affections, the lady replies:—

“God forbid that I should undervalue the warm and faithful feelings of any of my fellow-creatures.

“I should deserve utter contempt if I dared to suppose that true attachment and constancy were known only by women. No, I believe you capable of everything great and good. I believe you equal to every important exertion, so long as—if I may be allowed the expression—so long as you have an object. I mean, while the woman you love lives, and lives for you. All the privilege I claim for my sex (it is not a very enviable one, you need not covet it) is that of loving longest, when existence or when hope is gone.”

In this beautiful passage the authoress has stated, what I believe to be true, (at least as regards appearances,) not only in respect of that kind of love to which she is especially alluding, but of every kind of love of which woman is capable. She has not, however, given us the reason for the truth which she has asserted; and she has rather left us to infer from it that the love of woman is stronger and more enduring than that of man—a proposition which certainly requires to be modified or explained. The true reason for the phenomenon which she has noticed I believe to be this. The life of woman lies more in the sphere of her affections than that of man. The *inner* life, of which the heart is the centre, just as the brain is of the *outer*, and which is the life of feeling, instinct, and imagination, just as the outer life is of reason and calculation; this inner life is, generally speaking, more developed in woman than in man—if we except poets, who are indeed altogether an exceptional class of beings, and even these have a different kind

of inner life than that of woman. Theirs is the life of the imagination ; woman's that of the affections. As a general rule, the difference between woman and man in this point, may be thus described:—The inner life, in woman, rises more to the surface than in man ; it mixes more with her every-day existence. In man that life is more hidden and less diffused, but it is (perhaps for this very reason) proportionably deeper, on the principle that “the stillest streams run the deepest.” And this difference in the constitution of their minds, adapts them for the respective work which the Creator has designed them to perform, and also points out in what sphere their duty lies. The business of man's existence lies in the outer world—in public life, in the support of his family, and the discharge of the duties of his profession. The business of woman lies in private life—in the care of her household, her husband, her children, or her parents, as the case may be ; and if she have none of these ties, the feelings and sentiments of friendship or of philanthropy ought to create for her objects on which her care may be expended ; and her power consists in the influence which she exerts in ministering to the comfort and moulding the minds of those who are thus united to her by the bonds, either of consanguinity or affection ; and this is no mean power. It is a power scarcely inferior to that of man ; for though man moves the world, makes laws, and carries on the business of public life, it is woman who makes man what he is. But such being their respective spheres of action, we can

easily see that man cannot live in his inner life—in his affections. These must be the episodes in his existence, his relaxations ; whereas in woman they are the business of life. Man's affections may be equally strong, but their very strength leads him forth into the outer world, for the sake of those who are the objects of them, and in order that he may shape out such a path in life as will be advantageous to them. Such, then, being the state of the case, I cannot help incidentally suggesting the question, whether it is not a mistake to educate women like men, and still more so, to try and bring them into public life ; for in making such an attempt, we run the risk of losing the substance by grasping at a shadow. We cannot indeed destroy that inner life, in which woman's real strength lies, but we may shut it up ; and I should say that publicity of life, and also an essentially masculine cultivation of the intellect, have a tendency to produce this result, and by so doing, injure, if they do not destroy, that delicate tact, which is peculiar to woman—that subtile power of instinctive discrimination, which decides more quickly and often more justly than the boasted reason of man. And I doubt whether you get an equivalent for what you lose. Of course wherever there is a demand, there will be a certain KIND of supply, but will it be in this case a supply of the genuine article ? I doubt it. In those countries where they make women do all the field work, their muscles attain to something like the strength of

those of a man, but their constitution is impaired, and their lives shortened.

The same rule holds good in respect of the mind. If you educate a woman like a man, or give her the work of a man to do, you injure her as a woman; and moreover, you will not make her altogether like a man; for you cannot, as a general rule, give her what is peculiar to man—the administrative power, the creative power, and the power of going to the bottom of a subject, and exhausting it. I do not deny that there may possibly be found exceptions to this rule—idiocyncracies—and if there are such, they must be treated in an exceptional manner. I am here speaking of what is the general rule. Therefore, though I would not be thought to oppose intellectual culture in woman, I should say that her mental education ought to be different from that of man. The very shape of her forehead, as contrasted with that of man, shows what that training should be. A woman's forehead is, generally speaking, smooth and well-balanced, whereas the forehead of a man is full of hills and valleys. This shows that whereas man should, in many cases, devote himself to one study, and master it, woman's education should be less profound, but more general, such as would enable her to sympathize with the occupations of man, and assist him by her better balanced judgment, and lay the foundation for the education of her children. Her knowledge of every subject should be just

enough to awaken, and not to overpower, her inner nature.

And now, having finished this episode, I must return to what I was before saying. The remarks which I have now made (if true) will serve to show why it is that the love of woman can live more on the food of remembrance than that of man. Living, as she does, in the inner life of affection, she can continue to feed on the love of some one individual; even when the object which produced that love is removed. *She* does not require the stimulus of its outward bodily presence. But man does; however much his heart may be torn by the loss of one who formed the centre of his life, he feels that his occupation is not gone; the roses of life may be faded, but the business of life, and even the objects which make life worth living for, are not all removed, and these objects cannot be attained by feeding on a buried affection. Therefore, his feelings and conduct in the case of a bereavement, might be described by the following verse from Byron:—

“ One struggle more, and I am free
From pangs which rend my heart in twain;
One last long sigh to love and thee,
Then back to busy life again.”

Indeed, much as he may try to cherish his grief for the memory of the departed, and endeavour to keep his wound open, as if he thought the healing of it were a sacrilege, a dishonour to the dead, he finds himself obliged to lock up the once-loved image in an inner

chamber of his heart. But does the memory of it really die there? Is his forgetfulness that of the heart as well as the mind? No; I deem more nobly of my sex (such of them as have hearts) than to believe this; and I think it will be found (in the case of many a man) that when the outer life is passing away, and death, that great revealer of secrets—(I mean the secrets of our own hearts, for I do not hold with Tennyson that “he keeps the keys of all the creeds,”)—when death casts his shadows, and also his lights, before him, and the inner life bubbles up to the surface, the once cherished image will seem again to hover round the dying man, and one of the last words he will utter will be the one loved name.

“No, that hallowed form is ne'er forgot,
Which first love traced.”

But we must now return to Romeo. What I have been saying during this long digression will serve to show that his love is essentially the love of a woman; and he himself appears to have a lurking suspicion of this, when, for a moment, he awakens from his dream, and says—

“Oh, sweet Juliet, thy beauty hath
Made me effeminate,
And in my temper soften'd nature's steel.”

And the Friar seems to hold a similar opinion, or, at all events, perceives some peculiar weakness in his pupil's love, when he reproves him, not, “as he

affirms," for *loving*, but for *doting*. And again, where, on another occasion, he says—

“ Unseemly woman in a seeming man
Or unbeseeing beast, in seeming both,”

which is the Friar's way of expressing what might be otherwise expressed by saying that (on the occasion referred to) Romeo exhibits all the weakness of a woman combined with the impatience and violence of a man. It may, indeed, be urged that some allowance should be made for a man who is in love, and that many of the follies and weaknesses of lovers are such as time or, at all events, marriage, will cure only too effectually; as Sir A. Absolute says to Julia of Falkland, “Marry him, Julia, and you'll find he'll mend surprisingly.” This may be true to a certain extent. But there are some weaknesses which betoken a radical defect of character, such as time and alteration of circumstances cannot cure. That Romeo's weakness was of this sort, we may see from the fatal results which it produced, and also from the fact that it was not a weakness which is characteristic of men in his situation. If any woman believes that her lover dreams of her from morning till night as *she* does of him, she probably does him gross injustice. The fact is, I believe, that most men when they have once entered into a serious engagement, begin to *awake* from a dream, instead of falling into it. A life of future responsibility seems to cast its shadow before them; they have now somebody to live for besides themselves, and life, therefore, for

the first time, appears real and earnest. They awake to diligence, prudence, and practical ambition, and, sometimes, even to serious thoughts on religion, and thus the very strength of their love gives that love other food to feed on, besides itself.

Woman, on the other hand, when similarly circumstanced, awakens, indeed, to a sense of her responsibilities ; but since in her case these responsibilities lie (as we have before pointed out) in the sphere of the affections, consequently, what is a dream to man, is no dream to her. Now Romeo, as a lover and an engaged man, acts and feels just as a woman should, and generally *does*, act and feel in the same position. We cannot, therefore, be surprised at the rash act by which he for ever prevents the accomplishment of his hopes. It was the act of a woman rather than of a man. Disappointments in love have often caused the death of women, through the operation of *disease*, if not by their own hand. Men, on the other hand, have frequently died of a broken heart, or have been led to lay violent hands on themselves, from disappointed ambition, from shame, from mortification, from ruined fortunes, or from fears of the future ; but there is scarcely any instance (that I can recollect) where love, and love alone, unassisted by the operation of other causes, has led to this result. It is a remarkable fact, in accordance with this statement, that those mournful plains in the realms below, over which, hidden by myrtle groves, wandered the spirits of those who had been the victims of love, were,

according to Virgil's account, peopled chiefly with women. At least, in going over the names of the most celebrated among the inmates of these abodes, he mentions the name of only one man, Sichæus.

But though death, or a life of blighted sorrow, is, in the case of women, a commoner and more natural consequence of bereavements, or disappointments in love, than it is in that of men, I think I need hardly say that it is neither necessary nor advisable that it should produce this result in either case. And, indeed, I believe that it is not the largest hearts, either in men or women, which are broken or soured by disappointment. A large heart has the materials for cure within itself; when driven out of one channel it forces itself into another; or else, like a river, which, from being dammed up, has overflowed its banks, and waters the surrounding country, it spreads far and wide, and diffuses its genial influence over society. The heart which has lost the object on which it used to centre its affection, sometimes learns by that very loss to love mankind.

But to return to Romeo: had he loved like a man, he would not have destroyed himself, and then his dearest wishes would have been crowned with success. It is inexpressibly mournful to see a man so near to happiness, and yet finally stopping short of it. It is like seeing a ship go down at sea when just nearing the shore; and were it not that the catastrophe is partly to be ascribed to the fault of the parties who are the subject of it, the story would be too sad to read. But, even in spite of this slight

alloy which the poetical justice of the author introduces, we can heartily subscribe to the last words of the play, and say that

“ Never was a tale of greater woe
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.”

And now, having disposed of the principal personages of the drama, our task is nearly done ; but we must say something respecting the subordinate characters. Of these there are only three which deserve notice—the Nurse, the Friar, and Mercutio. The Nurse is admirably drawn. She is a most correct specimen of the class to which she belongs; not, indeed, altogether a favourable one, for she is both coarse and low-principled. These qualities, however, belong to her merely as an individual ; and besides them, she possesses, in an eminent degree, the virtues and peculiarities of her sex. She is affectionate, faithful, devoted, garrulous, and fidgetty. Every trifling incident which relates to her young charge is as important in her eyes as the smallest facts in the life of a great man are to his biographer. Though she would be almost willing to die for Juliet, she enhances the importance of her smallest services, and endeavours to make her news more valuable, by grumbling before she communicates them, and tries the patience of her young charge—a quality of which Juliet has none to spare—by delay.

There is something beautiful in the devotion which nurses exhibit, and retain to the last hour of their lives, towards the family in which they have lived,

and especially towards the members of it who have been the former objects of their care. With less than a mother's privileges, they exhibit all the affection of a mother; and though that affection occasionally exhibits itself in a somewhat grotesque form, *i.e.* "in the chronicling of small beer," it must be recollected that it is not their own small beer nor that of their own family which they chronicle. An unselfish, disinterested devotion, in whatever form it may exhibit itself, is not a thing to be despised. Let those who are the objects of it show that they value it. If any of you have one of these faithful retainers of whom I have been just speaking, still living, let it be your care (especially in their declining years) to repay their former service and their present undying devotion, by providing for their wants, ministering to their comfort, and endeavouring to listen to them with sympathy, even when they dwell with tedious circumstantiality on the events of your early life.

The next character we must notice is the Friar. He stands to Romeo in somewhat the same relation that the Nurse does to Juliet. The task of forming their pupil's mind devolves upon each of them. But as the Friar is *wise*, and the Nurse *foolish*, the former endeavours to eradicate his pupil's faults, whereas the latter fosters, if she does not create, the faults of Juliet. It is no slight praise to say of the Friar that he is of all mentors the most tolerable; he is not always trying to keep his pupil in leading-strings, nor does he bore him with too much advice. Though a churchman, and, by his profession, prohibited from

marriage, he is not, like the Mentor of Telemachus, an enemy to love in laymen. Altogether, he is indulgent to the feelings of youth, and possesses none of that severity which generally characterizes a recluse. Indeed, his faults lie on the more amiable side of too great indulgence. It cannot be denied that he was wrong in joining the young couple clandestinely, and thus conniving at an act of filial disobedience. But the request which he makes in the last scene—a request which seems to come from his heart—that if anyone is to suffer the punishment, it may fall upon himself, disposes us to pardon him.

The last personage which we shall notice is Mercutio. He is of all Shakespeare's lighter characters, the most buoyant and mercurial, and perhaps for this very reason, he is of all, the least really humorous. As I am not delivering a lecture on humour, I must be brief in explaining this apparent paradox. But in the first place I will appeal to facts, in confirmation of what I have said. It is well known that all the celebrated humourists, with scarcely an exception, were men subject to melancholy; and it is generally admitted that the power of pathos and of humour go together. The reason for these facts is as follows:—The feeling of the ludicrous is produced by incongruities, and incongruities arise, chiefly from the fallen condition of man, from the contrast which continually presents itself, between what he is and what he was evidently intended to be. In its more serious developments this contrast is too mournful to be made a subject for mirth;

it produces either pure compassion, or compassion mixed with a feeling of reprobation ; but in matters of more trifling importance it excites laughter. Now the same power of discrimination and the same acuteness of sensibility enable men to see and feel both the more serious and the trifling incongruities of life. The humourous man cannot therefore really be the light-minded butterfly which he sometimes appears. But Mercutio is essentially light-minded. He has not sufficient sense of the ills of life to be a real humourist ; but his volubility and high spirits will not allow us to be over critical as to the subject-matter of what he says ; he is a capital foil to Romeo, an agreeable relief to the seriousness and earnestness of his friend.

It is well indeed that ardent lovers should possess, as they sometimes do, some such jocose friend, who good-naturedly makes a butt of them, or their company would be intolerable. But as we remarked before, it is well that Mercutio is removed early in the play, for besides the fact that he would have spoilt the most tragic scenes, he is a person whose company would very soon have wearied us.

And now having come to the end of my subject, I must draw to a conclusion, which I will do with one final observation. I can easily conceive that before hearing this lecture, many persons might have been inclined to smile at the idea of a grave lecturer selecting so sentimental a subject (for such it would be generally esteemed) as the play of "Romeo and Juliet." They could not have foreseen how remorsefully

I was about to pull a butterfly to pieces, to subject the most beautiful love story which was ever written, to the dissecting knife of anatomical criticism ; and yet I can safely say that I am not more insensible than my neighbours to the pathos of the play. But the work of dissection on which I was engaged, has tended to call my attention to a fact in the economy of the human mind, which, though sufficiently well known, is also perhaps sufficiently often overlooked to make it worth mentioning. It is this, that few things tend more effectually to destroy, (for the time being) our feelings, whether of pain or pleasure, than the endeavour to analyse them ; *e.g.* to inquire into the materials of which our happiness is composed, tends to injure that happiness. Again, to analyse our religious faith, tends, for the time being, almost to destroy it. So also in respect of painful feelings. Burton wrote his anatomy of melancholy, in order to relieve melancholy. Some persons have thought that he had better have taken to reading light literature. But possibly he may have been the best judge of what was good for him. There are times when we cannot divert our thoughts from what is painful ; and at those times we have no resource but to look our pain in the face and conquer it, because we cannot run away from it. I would not, as a general rule, encourage the egotistical habit of writing down our feelings, and making ourselves the heroes of a tragedy ; but extreme cases sometimes call for extreme remedies, and the plan I have mentioned may occasionally be resorted to as

ast resource. and may prove successful. Tennyson writing "In Memoriam," works himself out of sorrow into triumphant joy ; and whether or no we follow his example and put down our thoughts in writing, we may at all events, by judiciously handling our griefs and disappointments, discover the purpose which they were sent, and extract from them materials for ultimate happiness. In the simple words of the poet Cowper—

"The tear that is wiped with a little address,
May be follow'd perhaps by a smile."



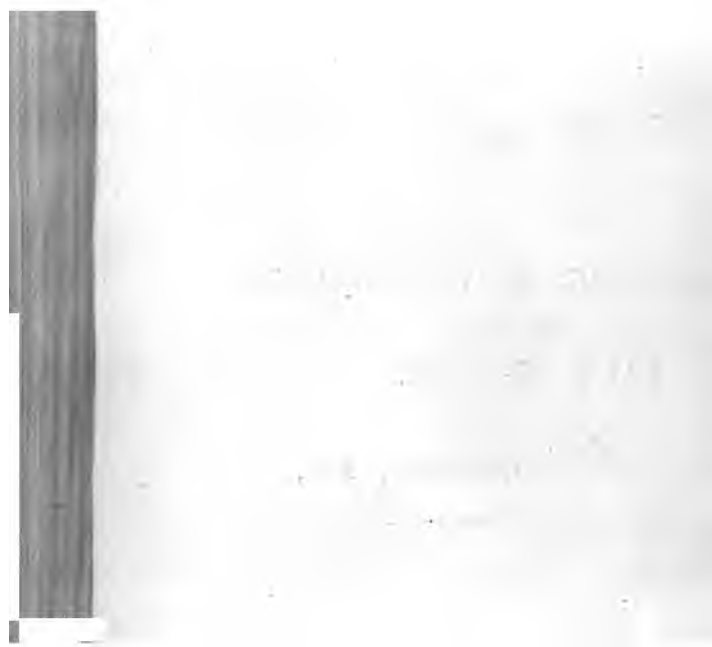


RECOLLECTIONS OF WORDSWORTH
AND THE
LAKE COUNTRY.

BY

ROBERT PERCEVAL GRAVES, A.M.,

Sub-Dean of the Chapel Royal.





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I MUST begin by saying that I felt much hesitation as to whether I was warranted in complying with the invitation to address you which I had the honour to receive from the Committee of "The Afternoon Lectures." When appealed to by them, I recognised the duty which lies upon every member of society to contribute according to his powers to the common stock of elevating pleasure, and I felt for the difficulty in which they were placed by the withdrawal of a lecture which had been announced: on the other hand, I knew myself to be unpractised in such addresses, and to be without the advantage of note as author or critic; and I feared that from these causes, and from the shortness of time allowed for preparation, I should fall below the standard which has been in this place so worthily maintained. The subject which was suggested to me was one, however, which enabled me on special grounds to decide on undertaking the task; for I saw that what must have been looked for from me was not profound or elaborate

criticism, but rather such testimony as a man of average intelligence might feel at liberty to give respecting the personality, as illustrating his works, of at least one distinguished author, whom he had enjoyed a favourable opportunity of knowing. It is with this understanding that I address myself to my task. I feel secure against the danger of ministering to an appetite for gossip on points with which the public has no concern ; but I ask indulgence, as for other defects, so especially for the air of egotism which I fear must pervade my lecture : in excuse for which I may plead that it is essentially involved in the giving of testimony. I am here to impart to you my impressions : it is for you, accepting them, I trust, as truthfully uttered, to assign to them their due modicum of value, and to draw from them such help as they may afford towards a right understanding and appreciation of the writings of the poet I am to speak of.

It was in the year 1833 that, through the introduction of a friend never to be thought of by me without reverence and gratitude, I first became acquainted with the Lake District of England, and the distinguished persons who then inhabited it. The charms which I there enjoyed of lakes of many characters in all their moods—of mountains of bold and noble features, bathed in purple light or “ spiritualised by mists ”—of streams, not large, but remarkable for their wayward animation and their pure transparence—of native woods, not grand, but yet rich from the variety of their tints, embracing a wide range of the gamut

of colour, from the dark tone of the yew and holly, through oak, and sycamore, and alder, and hazel, to the silver birch and the ash with its leaves of palest gold seemingly on the point of melting into the autumnal air—of wild flowers, exquisite in beauty, and scattered all around with a lavish prodigality ;— these charms of nature, in combination with the highest intellectual pleasures, induced in me a strong desire to be myself a denizen of the favoured region ; and in the year 1835, partly through the intervention of Mr. Wordsworth, I became the resident clergyman of the parish of Windermere. A residence there of nearly thirty years, which it gave me deep pain to terminate, enabled me to know the people as well as the country, and I joyfully and gratefully bear my testimony to their sterling character. The class of “statesmen,” or estatesmen, so-called because owners of the ground they occupy, have many of the qualities of an aristocracy. Tall in general and of finely formed features, which have a certain hardness of expression, derived from constant conflict with an ungenial climate, they are independent in their feelings and bearing ; but this independence is usually free from rudeness, and is oftener allied to a proud and sensitive shyness. Completely devoid of hypocrisy, they are honest and truthful, save, it may be, for a certain slackness in the exercise of judicial condemnation, arising, in large part at least, from the kindness of heart which makes them unwilling permanently to depress a neighbour’s character or fortunes. A recent number of the *Quarterly Review*, in an

excellent article on Westmorland, supplies some amusing examples, which I can fully endorse, of their more than Attic moderation in speech ;—their describing, for instance, a bad man as “‘a vara moderate chap,” while on a thorough reprobate the remark was made that “‘there were a deal of folks mair particler in dooin reet nar him ;”—but the good Westmorland woman’s reference to the time of the French Revolution as that in which “‘there was sic a dee-al of uneasiness i’ France,” is perhaps a typical example that cannot be surpassed. They are apt to be keen and tenacious in regard to their rights to property, so that litigation has been with some ‘statesmen a favourite pastime ; but in times of sickness or trial they are excellent neighbours, helping freely with personal tendance as well as with the contents of their household stores. They are calm in judgment, and their affections are slowly kindled, but when once kindled, though sparing of outward expression, they burn with a steady enduring warmth ; and when their blood is up, they will, with as unflinching a spirit and as decisive energy as any men in England, do yeoman’s service in behalf of person or cause that is dear to them. A fine specimen of this character is drawn, evidently from the life, by Mrs. Lynn Linton, in her recent novel, “‘Lizzie Lorton.” I have known and honoured more than one Jobby Dowthwaite. It is on many grounds to be lamented that from various causes the class is surely tending to extinction ; and it is to be feared that the high qualities derived from them, which pervaded the

whole population, will soon lose much of their distinctive prominence : for now, year by year increasingly, a promiscuous flood of tourists surges up into the remotest valleys, emigration thins the old families, capital buys them out, new settlers of all ranks seem to start from the ground in every quarter, and an assimilating process is perpetually at work. It may be that it brings with it some amount of compensation ; but no one who remembers, as I do, the time when doors and windows were left unfastened at night, when neighbours took almost a domestic interest in everything that befel a neighbour, whether rich or poor, can feel a very confident trust that the change will give things as precious as those it takes away. At all events it may be said without doubt, that Wordsworth was happy in being born in a region of which the natural features were so noble and beautiful, and among a peasantry so simple and manly, and especially that his time was before either of these suffered to any great extent from the sophistication which they are now undergoing.

In speaking of Wordsworth to an audience of my countrymen and country-women, I may not unfitly commence by saying that he always manifested a lively and tender interest in the history, the difficulties, and the prospects of Ireland. As he was in advance of his countrymen in his views of many most important subjects respecting themselves, (I may instance his conviction of the obligation of the State to secure the instruction of the children of the poor,) so, it struck me, he was in his feeling towards Ireland and the Irish.

He never considered the discussion of the evils of Ireland to be a bore, and he appreciated in the kindest spirit the better traits in the character of her people. To several of her more distinguished sons he was bound in ties not only of esteem but of affection. I may mention, as within my own cognizance, Sir William Rowan Hamilton, Professor Archer Butler, Sir Aubrey de Vere, and the living inheritor of that name, and of a double portion of his father's poetic talent. Another Irishman was at one time much with Wordsworth, and the object to him of a peculiar psychological interest and admiration. I refer to Mr. Archer, son of a citizen of Dublin, who with no mean amount of original power, had a passion for poetic literature, and possessed so remarkable a memory, that he knew by heart the works of all the classical English poets, and on the prompting of a phrase from Wordsworth, could take up the passage on the instant, and recite in continuation *ad libitum*. I believe he died early. Of our Sir William Hamilton Wordsworth spoke with quite a special warmth of admiration and affection : indeed he bracketed him with Coleridge, as one of the two men personally known to him whose powers had impressed him with wonder ; and to the mind and poetry of Eliza Hamilton, Sir William's sister, (herself admitted to the honouring intimacy of his family,) he awarded unusual marks of his estimation. His one short tour in Ireland was unfortunately, as I have heard him record with regret, made in the carriage-and-four of his friend Mr. Marshall, and therefore supplied him

with few new images and little motive to write. It embraced Dublin with the Observatory, Killarney, and the Giant's Causeway. Attached as he was to the English Lake Land, of which his poetry is the atmosphere, his spirit the *genius loci*, he yet admitted that for concentration of beauty, romantic, fantastic, and luxuriant, it had nothing to show equal to the group of the Killarney lakes. The advantage of the English lakes was in their number and their variety of character, and generally in the forms and proportions of the surrounding mountains. The only record in his poems of his visit consists of a reference to two eagles which he saw at the Promontory of Fairhead. In a fine sonnet, mourning the condition of the imprisoned eagle of Dunolly Castle, near Oban, he says :

“ The last I saw
 Was on the wing : stooping, he struck with awe
 Man, bird, and beast : then, with a consort paired,
 From a bold headland, their loved aerie's guard,
 Flew high above Atlantic waves to draw
 Light from the fountain of the setting sun.
 Such was this prisoner once ; and when his plumes
 The sea-blast ruffles as the storm comes on,
 Then, for a moment, he, in spirit, resumes
 His rank 'mong free-born creatures that live free,
 His power, his beauty, and his majesty.”

But in a letter written soon after his return to England, he says, “ If I were a younger man, and could prevail upon an able artist to accompany me, there are few things I should like better than giving a month or six weeks to explore the county of Kerry

only." How one could desire that our Petrie had been his guide and companion, and that with Petrie, Wordsworth had not only explored Kerry, but had visited the 'Home of the Heron' in Connemara and the historic remains of Clonmacnois! I have heard it said in this place by one whom I could easily forgive for saying it, that Petrie looked on nature with a "more loving eye than Wordsworth." I confess this is to me impossible to imagine, and I sincerely believe would have been as unimaginable by Petrie himself, who was a life-long lover of Wordsworth's poems, and in the latest months of his life sought consolation for his constrained withdrawal from nature herself in the renewed study of poems which were to him, in no condemnable sense, authentic scriptures of nature.

Let us now pass to Wordsworth in his home, and to his poetry. I deprecate not the imputation of partiality in what I say of either. I am deeply sensible of the honour of his friendship, and I gratefully own that some of the best influences of my life have been derived from intercourse with him and his family. Yet, with regard to his poetry, I may say that I have the personal satisfaction of thinking that my love and value for it were for years unbiassed by any personal consideration whatever. While yet a boy, I discovered among the contents of a box of old books, stowed away in the garret of a country house, a tattered volume, which I still possess, of the Lyrical Ballads, and I immediately took to my heart the writer of the *Lines written above Tintern*

Abbey; and the author of *Genevieve* and *The Ancient Mariner*.

There are many portraits of Wordsworth. Upon that which longest represented him to the public—the portrait by Pickersgill, of which the original is at St. John's College, Cambridge, and which was engraved as a frontispiece for several editions of the works,—I cannot but pronounce a condemnatory verdict, remembering all the while that it drew from the poet a sonnet both beautiful and touching. Whilst, of course, it conveys some idea of the general form, it fails to impart the characteristic expression of strength, and gives, instead, an attempt at the sentimental, which suggests the epithet of 'maudlin.' I can have little doubt that that frontispiece, conveying a false impression of the poet, has even conduced with many to a misinterpretation of his poetry. The bust by Chantrey, an engraving of which appears in the one volume edition of the poems, is a work of thought and elevation, but is not a striking likeness : that by Angus Fletcher is much more so, being, as I conceive, truer both to the form and bearing of the head. A miniature by Miss Gillies, also engraved, gives a pleasing aspect of the poet in his less earnest conversational and domestic mood, but, if amiable, it, as well as Pickersgill's, is weak. Far otherwise is it with the portrait by Haydon : this alone deserves to be the historic portrait of Wordsworth : it represents him musing on the side of Helvellyn, the mountain mists floating around him. Nothing can be truer to the original than the droop of the head

weighed down by the thoughts and feelings over which the active imagination is pleurably brooding; and if there be some want of finish and refinement in the modelling of the features, there is a grandeur at the same time poetical and truthful in the fine development of the temple and crown—in the visionary look, and in the hanging under-lip, quivering with the coming verse. Mrs. Browning has celebrated it in a fine sonnet, commencing with the words “Wordsworth upon Helvellyn !” and concluding, “This is the Poet and his Poetry.” There is a good engraving from it of the head by Lupton. I have seen, but not near enough to judge of it, the sitting statue by ¹⁸⁴² ~~Theed~~, which is in the Baptistery of Westminster Abbey. But one criticism at once suggested itself to me. It supposes the poet composing with a pencil in his hand. Now, this conveys an idea in exact opposition to what was the habit of the poet. Almost all his poems, as I have heard from himself, were composed out of doors, as he either freely traversed hill and vale, or paced some favourite level strip, such as that at Lancrigg, or that in the fir-grove consecrated to the memory of his brother, or a terrace in his garden. It was in such places that, to use his own words, he

“scatter’d to the winds
The vocal raptures of fresh poesy.”

And sometimes weeks elapsed before the poems thus composed were committed to paper, a process which was generally performed by the hand of wife,

or sister, or daughter. And accordingly an authentic interest attaches to another portrait by Miss Gillies, which represents the poet dictating, and his wife recording the newly-completed verses. I may express my conviction that this mode of composition which he practised has a great advantage over that which is carried on with the pen or pencil in hand, both in regard to the flow and rhythm of the work, and the willingness of the composer to go on remoulding and correcting until his ideal be attained, or at least more nearly approximated to.

No one could enjoy anything beyond the most cursory admission into the home of Wordsworth, without feeling that he was breathing there a moral atmosphere singularly pure and healthful. The stamp of truth and genuineness was on everything. Persons and events, theories and projects, were estimated by a standard which was intended to determine, not their conventional and temporary, but their real and permanent value. One would have said that to wear any mask would have been impossible in the presence of a family so truthful and so sensitive, so quick to recognise every genuine emotion, so sure to give instinctive yet not ungentle indication of their sense of what was false or exaggerated. But all this was the action of no polemically critical spirit: kindness and human-heartedness reigned in full concord with truth, the sacred recesses of feeling were carefully respected, and holy things touched with reverence. All around corresponded: an exquisite nature looked in at the windows or was looked

out upon—flowers and books, prints, paintings, and sculptured figures, all loved with something of a personal love, adorned the rooms, which were pervaded by a homely elegance, and one saw that everything was for use or for enjoyment, nothing for ostentation. I need not say that all these things indicated essential characteristics of the poet himself. I am more anxious to go on and say that when one came into contact with himself it was his strength above all things which impressed one. Here was no merely amiable, no merely simple, or reverential, or imaginative man, but one eminently masculine and strong: a man of strong intellect, of strong feelings, of sturdy, massive individuality. If I do not apply to him the epithet “intense,” it is because I conceive it to belong more properly to a weaker type of man in a state of strain; but I never met with a mind which to me seemed to work constantly with so much vigour, or with feelings so constantly in a state of fervour: the strong intellect was, to use his own expression, “*steeped in*” the strong feeling, but the man was always master of both: so broad was the basis of his mental constitution, so powerful the original will which guided and controlled his emotions. I believe the recognition of this fact of the strength of his intellectual and passionate nature to be of high importance as conducing to a right conception of his poetry. I am persuaded that many have come to its perusal with a prepossession founded on—that Pickersgill portrait, for one thing—and on a few poems, which became the subject of ridicule and

parody, and which were indeed simple to baldness, but were at the same time proof of a strength, which, conscious of having done and being able to do nobler work, was willing to defy the criticism of the day in assertion by extreme instances of the truth of his poetic theory of expression, and of the value of the germs of thought and feeling which those poems contained. Persons who come with such a prepossession to the study of Wordsworth, are like those who contravene the rule which he lays down for seeing to advantage a noble lake. They approach it in such a manner that they look away from the grandeur and beauty of mountain and wood which encircle its head, and spend their regards upon the narrower waters and tamer shores which lie at the foot. Coming thus to the study of Wordsworth, they meet with a fervour and exaltation of expression which they cannot account for, partly because they did not expect it, partly because the objects with which it is connected are viewed by the poet through a different medium from that through which they have beheld them. Fully to enjoy, nay even rightly to understand, Wordsworth's poetry it is necessary, I am convinced, to bring to its study, something not only of similar experience, but of the same energy of intellect and feeling with which it was conceived: in nothing lower than a mood of *meditative passion*, can either the total impression of the poem be received, or the extraordinary beauty and appropriateness of his epithets, (which, are for the most part, epithets of life and action, not of colour only,)

be appreciated. What I have desired to convey, may perhaps be better apprehended, if you think of such an expression as this—

“the songs, the bloom,
And all the *mighty ravishment of spring.*”

What breadth, what force are here ! Or, again, take that line in a description of evening :—

“The silent hills and *more than silent sky.*”

How deeply, like the infinite starry sky itself, does that expression sink into the spirit of the sympathetic reader ! But in both instances even a passion of sympathy is required from him.

Another circumstance, which intercourse with Wordsworth was calculated to impress upon one, was his general ability. No one in the habit of conversing with him, but must have been struck with the power, the strength and effectiveness, with which he could argue upon any subject, small or great, provided it was not scientific : he could handle every side of a question, and enforce his own opinion with the energy and tenacity, but with more than the indications of conviction of a lawyer. In the same way, his faculty of observation was capable of employing itself successfully upon objects quite different from those to which he especially consecrated it—upon objects of which his successful treatment would have been widely appreciated, and might have rendered him widely popular. For proofs of this, I may refer

you to the description of his London life in "The Prelude," some passages in which develop even a power of satire—the portrait of the fashionable preacher for instance ; and it may be mentioned by the way, that he once in conjunction with his friend, afterwards Archdeacon, Wrangham, composed imitations, referring to the vices of his day, of some Satires of Juvenal : but feeling that these were not the authentic manifestations of the spirit he was of, he committed them to the flames. The following lines describing his school-fellows, at Hawkshead, contain, indeed, some peculiarly Wordsworthian touches, but they manifest a power of looking at his subject with the eye of a Crabbe or a Mulready. Speaking of the village church, he says—

" May she long

Behold a race of young ones like to those
With whom I herded !

A race of real children, not too wise,
Too learned, or too good ; but wanton, fresh,
And banded up and down by love and hate ;
Not unresentful where self-justified ;
Fierce, moody, patient, venturous, modest, shy ;
Mad at their sports like withered leaves in winds ;
Though doing wrong and suffering, and full oft
Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight
Of pain and doubt and fear, yet yielding not
In happiness to the happiest upon earth."

His *Character of the Happy Warrior*, prompted by Nelson's death, and containing also traits taken from Sir John Moore, and the poet's brother, John

Wordsworth, proves in a remarkable degree his power of appreciating the *genius for action*: it is too long to give in full, too perfect to bear mutilation. Another example I cite with an ulterior object; his illustration of *The Power of Music*, founded on his observation of a group of listeners surrounding a blind fiddler in Oxford-street. Of this I will read a part:—

“ His station is there ; and he works on the crowd,
He sways them with harmony merry and loud ;
He fills with his power all their hearts to the brim—
Was aught ever heard like his fiddle and him?

What an eager assembly ! what an empire is this !
The weary have life, and the hungry have bliss ;
The mourner is cheer'd and the anxious have rest ;
And the guilt-burthen'd soul is no longer oppress.

As the moon brightens round her the clouds of the night,
So He, where he stands, is a centre of light ;
It gleams on the face, there, of dusky-brow'd Jack,
And the pale-visaged Baker's, with basket on back.

That errand-bound 'Prentice was passing in haste—
What matter ! he's caught—and his time runs to waste ;
The Newsman is stopt, though he stops on the fret ;
And the half-breathless Lamplighter—he's in the net !

The Porter sits down on the weight which he bore ;
The Lass with her barrow wheels hither her store :—
If a thief could be here he might pilfer at ease ;
She sees the Musician, 'tis all that she sees !

He stands, back'd by the wall;—he abates not his din,
His hat gives him vigour with boons dropping in,
From the old, from the young, from the poorest; and there!
The one-pennied Boy has his penny to spare.

Oh! blest are the bearers, and proud be the hand
 Of the pleasure it spreads through so thankful a band;
 I am glad for him, blind as he is!—all the while
 If they speak, 'tis to praise, and they praise with a smile.

That tall Man, a giant in bulk and in height,
 Not an inch of his body is free from delight;
 Can he keep himself still, if he would! oh, not he!
 The music stirs in him like wind through a tree.

Mark that Cripple who leans on his crutch; like a tower
 That long has lean'd forward, leans hour after hour!—
 That Mother, whose spirit in fetters is bound,
 While she dandles the Babe in her arms to the sound.

Now, coaches and chariots! roar on like a stream;
 Here are twenty souls happy as souls in a dream:
 They are deaf to your murmurs—they care not for you,
 Nor what ye are flying, nor what ye pursue!"

With what force are all the figures in this group drawn and animated! It would make an admirable subject for the pencil of a *genre*-painter. The additional comment I make on this poem is, that Wordsworth had himself no musical sense, no more than any sense of smell. His sense of hearing, indeed, as well as of sight, was peculiarly keen, but like his friend Elia, he could not distinguish one tune from another. And yet, besides discriminating exquisitely the sounds of nature—witness these lines—

“The fir-grove murmurs with a sea-like sound—”

“The stationary blast of waterfalls—”

he had the deepest enjoyment of the various harmonies of versification; he has himself composed some

of the most nobly modulated stanzas in the language, and nothing could be more beautiful than his own recitation of his poetry : coming from him, it was far more than well pronounced : it breathed, or murmured, or flowed, or sounded forth, with all the natural variety, the rise and fall, the finely graduated modulation, of a mountain breeze, or a stream issuing from some deep recess, and wending onward with a living current. Here, then, was a full sense of beauty in the sounds of words, and a delicate feeling not only of rhythm, or the shorter markings of time in verse, but of its grander sweeps of harmony, and yet no discriminating sense of music properly so called. Such a case, and there are many such, seems to prove the latter to be a gift mysteriously distinct, which, perhaps, from its distinctness, it may be impossible to define.

But, to return : the possession for which I have given Wordsworth credit, and of which he could not but be conscious, of practical ability, and faculties adapted to gain success in other fields of life, and in more popular and lucrative departments of literature, enhances, I think, in a high degree, the nobility of his early-formed resolution to dedicate his life to the poetic interpretation of elemental nature, to the elevation of universal humanity. To carry into effect this resolve, and fulfil the functions of this poetic priesthood, he had to suppress his own prudential misgivings, and to resist the natural solicitude and displeasure of his relations ; he had to withdraw from the career of ambition upon which his

college companions had entered, to forego all prospect of immediate gain and reputation, and deliberately to settle in a remote valley, where a cottage, for which he paid eight pounds a year, was to be his home. All this was done by him heroically. Nor let his credit be the less on the plea that to do otherwise would have been a moral impossibility: they will not do him this injustice who know how often the nobler gifts and callings of men have been sacrificed to motives such as he overcame. In that cottage he spent what I think may be called the heroic period of his life. There he realised his noble motto of 'plain living and high thinking:' even a guest beneath his roof saw no beverage on his dinner-table but pure water; and some of you will remember how Walter Scott confesses that when sojourning with him he made daily a surreptitious walk to 'the public,' a mile off, to get a draught of beer. There, cheered, indeed, by the companionship, first, of his admirable sister, and then, also, of his no less admirable, though differently constituted, wife, he worked on assiduously and magnanimously; he added some of his most considerable works to the firstlings of his genius, which had been composed in the South of England; and while receiving no pecuniary reward for his labour, he silently endured a persecution of critical obloquy equally unrelenting and unjust. His profound conviction of the truth of his principles and the genuineness of his work sustained him, and gave him assurance that his time would come to be adequately recognized and appreciated. Slowly,

indeed, that time drew on, but it came at last ; and as in the days of gainsaying, he had never repented of his choice, so in the days of recognition he experienced no undue elation : he saw what he had foreseen ; and he received it much more as a tribute to the truths of which he was the utterer and expounder than to himself.

And here I may bear my testimony in reference to the charge of vanity which has been often brought against him, founded on the fact that in conversation he would frequently refer to his own poems. Having heard him often and often do so, I may say that my confirmed impression was, that this reference was made not in a spirit of personal egotism, but almost invariably in a feeling of deep value for the truths or the images which he had taken pains to perpetuate in forms of art, and of which he knew that his studied expression would probably surpass what he might originate on the moment. Indeed he seemed to regard, as I believe all great artists do, his works as something outside himself ; things which he could criticise and praise, like any other person ; and if he cited them oftener than the works of other poets, it was simply because the truths which they contained were to him the objects of a special love, and an absorbing interest. There are, however, records enough to prove, and my own memory corroborates them abundantly, that he loved the works of other poets and authors as well as his own, and that his criticism was genial in spirit, as well as penetrating and severe in its requirements. Often in

delightful walks with him have I heard him quote Lucretius, Virgil, (that great master, as he called him, of language,) and his favourite Horace. He was among the first to revive the interest in Chaucer, and to assert his high rank as a poet of genius. We know how pre-eminently dear to him was the poet of the heavenly *Una*. To Shakespeare he paid cordial and reverent homage, styling him, as I remember, the unapproached first of poets. Homer, whose *Odyssey* he oftenest quoted, he placed second, and Dante, I think, third. For Milton he had a special sympathy and admiration. In fact, all the great English poets were his familiars, and received his unstinted, though discriminating, praise. And he spoke gently of even those two contemporaries, by whom he was defamed—of Byron, who was entirely out of sympathy with him—of Shelley, who had warmly appreciated him as a poet, but could not tolerate the change in his politics. Burns he loved and pitied with a brother's heart, and the rising light of Tennyson he greeted at the earliest hour. He was a great deal too conscious of his own distinctive merits to be a jealous poet.

But that earnest individuality and fervid absorption in the subjects of his thought must be called in to explain another peculiarity which, I am aware, has been unfavourably noticed. An ungenial coldness of manner has been often ascribed to him. And, indeed, when a friend entered his room he might often be disappointed by an apparently uninterested recognition and a want of cordiality. The fact was that the earnestness with which his intellect worked ren-

dered it impossible for him quickly to turn from one object of thought to another : never was a man of less versatility or mobility : yet just for this very reason the friend might be perfectly assured that if he gave the poet time to pass out from the train of reflection which had engaged him, the habitual feeling of friendship would gradually more and more brighten his countenance, and the old cordiality warm the tones of his voice.

I believe that this peculiarity, together with the high moral standard which he used in judging the events of life, and the impossibility, derived from the truthfulness of his nature, of his concealing it from you, if he were at all displeased with you, did in point of fact operate with a chilling influence upon the sensitiveness of some friends. How far this was the history of the coolness which arose between him and Professor Wilson, who had been his early admirer and champion, I know not. Possibly Wordsworth, relying on the self-justifying virtue of his poetry, may not have manifested a satisfying amount of gratitude for that championship : possibly he may have shown more than was necessary of disapprobation in regard to some of the wild freaks of the Professor : I had, however, the pleasure of knowing that the regard and admiration felt all along at bottom by each for the other had in the end full recognition and expression. In the autumn of 1844 Wilson called on Wordsworth, who was then sojourning with his daughter in the Island-House on Windermere, and on his return he told me, with much emotion, that

he had been deeply affected by Wordsworth's kindness to him, and that his parting words, as he shook both his hands, were a fervent *God bless you!* I believe this was the last time they met. And if ever a similar cloud shadowed, as I suppose it did, Wordsworth's friendship with Coleridge, it is also true that long before the end it had completely passed away. I shall always remember the voice, broken with grief, with which he announced to me the death of his friend—the Wonderful—and related to me the attending circumstances, and how anxious he was to clear, as far as possible, that friend's memory, by assuring me that the origin of the pernicious recourse to opium was due to a frightful internal pain, which sometimes caused him, when they walked together in Somersetshire, to throw himself down, and writhe like a worm upon the ground.

And here I cannot help adverting to the beauty of Wordsworth's friendship with Sir George Beaumont. That it had the beauty of congeniality is proved by the exquisite description of his friend's character :* that it had the beauty of an honest frankness, I would prove by this citation from one of his letters—a citation by which we may all of us profit. After expressing some disapprobation of Mr. Pitt, he continues—"I am aware it is not unlikely you may differ greatly from me in these points. But I like in some things to differ with a friend, and that he should *know* I differ from him : it seems to make a more healthy friendship, to act as a relief to those notions and feelings which

* *Elegiac Musings.*

we have in common, and to give them a grace and spirit which they could not otherwise possess." How much beauty of affection belonged to that friendship is indicated in a touching manner by the sonnet which records his feelings at the sight of the Pine on Monte Mario. In his first view of Rome this object attracted his admiration, and at the same time he was told that its continuing to be an ornament of the landscape, was due to the intervention of his deceased friend :—

“ But when I learn'd the Tree was living there,
 Saved from the sordid axe by Beaumont's care,
 Oh, what a gush of tenderness was mine !
 The rescued Pine-tree with its sky so bright
 And cloud-like beauty, rich in thoughts of home,
 Death-parted friends and days too swift in flight,
 Supplanted the whole majesty of Rome,
 (Then first apparent from the Pincian Height,)
 Crown'd with St. Peter's everlasting Dome.”

Besides the impressive strength both of intellect and feeling which I have ascribed to Wordsworth, he possessed eminently another characteristic which largely enhanced one's satisfaction in intercourse with him—I mean his willingness to discuss all subjects on first principles. In this I thought him to compare greatly to his advantage with Southey, whose views, both of persons and matters in debate, struck me as having become those of a partisan. With Wordsworth, indeed, his readiness to deal with first principles was not so much a virtue as a moral necessity, for he was nothing if not philosophical. This ren-

dered his conversation most instructive and interesting. Of painting and sculpture, though no connoisseur in points of history or technical manipulation, he was an admirable critic, from his high ideal of the artist's function, his clear perception of the limits by which it was conditioned, and his power of justly applying his principles. I had many opportunities of forming a judgment on this point, and I remember well the pleasure and admiring approval with which he greeted the first publication of Mr. Ruskin. In this connection I dare say my hearers will be pleased to be reminded of a sonnet in which Wordsworth beautifully expresses one of the prerogatives of the pictorial art, its power of eternising a moment, of giving perpetuity to an evanescent phenomenon:—

“ Praised be the Art whose subtle power could stay
 Yon cloud and fix it in that glorious shape:
 Nor would permit the thin smoke to escape,
 Nor those bright sunbeams to forsake the day:
 Which stopp'd that band of travellers on their way,
 Ere they were lost within the shady wood,
 And show'd the bark upon the glassy flood
 For ever anchor'd in her sheltering bay.
 Soul-soothing Art ! whom Morning, Noontide, Even,
 Do serve with all their changeful pageantry ;
 Thou with ambition modest yet sublime,
 Here for the sight of mortal man hast given
 To one brief moment caught from fleeting time
 The appropriate calm of blest eternity.”

The same thought, with some modification, is exquisitely brought out in Keats's Ode *On a Grecian Urn*. I could not but see that when Wordsworth

asserted, as I heard him do, the priority of his own lines, he felt a peculiar satisfaction. Not that he suggested any borrowing of the idea on the part of Keats. I believe there is no reason for doubting that each of these poems shines with a light as original as it is brilliant.

It was that habit of dealing with first principles which prevented him from becoming a bigot in either politics or religion, and enabled him to maintain to the end of his life a mutually agreeable intercourse with friends who widely differed from him in both, and that, too, without an interdict being placed on the discussion of the topics of variance. All who argued with him on politics had the satisfaction of seeing that the grounds of opinions opposite to his own were not ignored, and that his own were based upon right principles, even where, from the under or over-valuing of some material consideration, he came to wrong practical conclusions. His arguments had always a substantial weight, and you felt that his prophecies, issuing, as they did, from a deep knowledge of human nature, would certainly have some amount of fulfilment. He continued to the end the expression, both in conversation and in poetry, of his early love of liberty and of political action on the part of a free people; only in later years he leant more stress than he had done on the requisite qualifications for such action. I feel certain he would have rejoiced as deeply as any in witnessing the admirable conduct of the artisans in the manufacturing districts of England during the cotton-famine—conduct which

proved so satisfactorily their progress in political knowledge and self-control. And so in religion he was a firm adherent of the Protestantism of the Church of England, and in his latest years he used to refer to his Sonnet, entitled *The point at issue*, as expressing his fixed view of the practical difference between that Church and the Church of Rome; but his wide sympathies were, to some extent, engaged by the Oxford movement, which he thought brought into action principles which had been too much neglected; though he was also of opinion that, like most reactions, it went too far; and ever his mind and his heart were open to see and to love goodness in a Romanist or Unitarian friend, and to appreciate what was beautiful and useful in the rites of another communion. Above all, he maintained a feeling and a language in accordance with those lines which were composed by him in one of the Catholic cantons of Switzerland, and which deserve to be impressed on the memories of us all:—

“ Doom'd as we are our native dust
 To wet with many a bitter shower,
 It ill befits us to disdain
 The altar, to deride the fane,
 Where simple sufferers bend, in trust
 To win a happier hour.
 * * * * *

“ Where'er we roam—along the brink
 Of Rhine—or by the sweeping Po,
 Through Alpine vale, or champain wide,
 Whate'er we look on, at our side
 Be Charity—to bid us think,
 And feel, if we would know.”

What I have said of his conversancy with first principles stands in connection, I think, with his whole work as a poet. His mind had a special affinity for the deeper elements of nature and man. He was not satisfied with general effects to be painted broadly and strikingly, nor, on the other hand, was he a realistic copyist, slavishly depicting minutiae, and teaching by external details. With a rare power of insight and analysis he detected beneath the surface the springs of our subtlest emotions; he watched the operation of influences, so broad, that, like an atmosphere, they were ordinarily unseen, so transient that none but an observer at once tranquilly patient and actively discerning could grasp them; and what was his peculiar prerogative was—that he did this, not as a mere philosophical analyst, by cold processes of intellect, but as a poet: these deeper elements he penetrated with the warmth of feeling, and coloured with the hues of imagination: and thus we owe to him the bringing out into definite form, for our more conscious enjoyment, of spiritual instincts which are at the foundation of our being—of transitional states of feeling, the knowledge and observation of which enrich for ever our self-intelligent life.

Wordsworth has received much and deserved credit for the leading part he took in reforming our poetic diction, by bringing it back from turgid conventionalisms to nature and truth, and every reader of his great prefaces must know that this was not unconsciously done, and feel that poetical criticism

is largely indebted to him for the principles he there lays down: yet no one could thoroughly understand—the man himself or his poetry without being convinced that this reform was on his part a spontaneous inevitable action of his mind and feelings: that, with his strength of feeling, his directness and powers of intellect, his inward prophet-like vision, it was an absolute impossibility but that his language should be simple, energetic, truthful, living. He was a free-man, who could brook no fetters; his was too grand, too earnest a soul, not to disdain all tinsel decorations.

Most interesting is it to read in *The Prelude* how, when the youth was in London, observing, and not without enjoyment and benefit, the various scenes of its manifold but conventional life, the mountains of his native region filled with their noble forms the back-ground of his inner consciousness, how its shepherds, in hardy conflict with the elements, "circumfused with grandeur" by the mists which magnified their lonely figures, or enjoying at times a "majestic indolence," haunted his imagination, and how a deep voice was continually uttering within his breast its moving accents, summoning him back to the study and the worthy interpretation of nature in her most favourable relations with man—of man unconventional and unsophisticated, manifesting more genuinely his human instincts, and operated on and moulded by less complex but not less noble agencies both of the external world and of society. Never was there a truer call to a great work. He is often

spoken of as if he were the poet of nature only, the interpreter of the language only of mountains, flowers, and streams : there can be no greater misconception. In *The Prelude* he recounts at large how his early passion for nature became *subordinate* to his feeling sympathy, his profound and passionate sympathy for man ; this is recorded in his *Tintern Abbey Lines* in words that will not die : and the very couplet which is so often quoted to prove that a flower was all in all to him,

“ To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears,”

is the conclusion of that glorious final stanza of his great ode, which declares the same consummation ; and the couplet which immediately precedes it, shows that the potency he here celebrates, is in reality that of sympathetic human feeling working by association through the flower :

“ Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys and fears,
To me,” &c.

A poem admirable as exemplifying this reflex action of human feeling on nature, and of the poetic imagination upon both, is the *Elegiac Stanzas* which were prompted by the sight of Peele Castle in a storm, after the poet had lost his brother by shipwreck. I wish that, in repeating it to you, I could communicate the pathetic charm with which it once

penetrated me when read out at the poet's desire, by Mrs. Wordsworth :

“ I was thy neighbour once, thou rugged pile,” &c.

It is, I think, to that affinity of Wordsworth's mind for primal truths that we are to ascribe the practice which pervades his poetry of making them, and the mental emotions connected with them, the main objects, almost, one would say, the persons of his song, so much does he give them a living power. Action is subordinate, except as it illustrates them, and a complication of actions—what we call a story—would, we feel, be quite an unnatural work for a mind so preponderantly intuitive and reflective. He is rather the rarely-gifted man who has the faculty of discerning where hidden fountains lie, and then sets free their bright living waters, than the constructive engineer who turns their streams to use, or the merchant who embarks upon them his treasures. Hence the absence from his poetry of that kind of interest which belongs to the novel or the drama ; and, if I were asked how, with the passionate mode of thought, and the deep benevolence which were his, he has failed to set forth the master-passion in a manner satisfactory to some readers, I should attribute it mainly to this source : for certainly, I believe, it has arisen from no default in the heart of the poet himself. In intercourse with him it was my delight to witness abundant proofs that the wide and deep benevolence expressed in his poetry was no mere theoretic philanthropy, but an active principle.

It showed itself towards dependants and neighbours as well as in the sacred circle of his home, and I remember touching instances, when I have joined him in a walk, of his putting aside all interest in conversation or ulterior object, if we met with any human being, were it only a little child, in trouble or distress, and making with persistency any needful effort to bring relief or comfort. And as with benevolence, so with affection. No one could doubt the fulness of his possession of it who beheld his religious care for his sister in her decline, his manly gentleness towards his wife, or the gaze of profound tenderness which he would fix upon his beloved daughter, either when, in bright mood, she would playfully contend with him,

“ happy as a bird
That rifles blossoms on a tree,
Turning them inside out with arch audacity ;”

or suggesting by her look of illness too sure a prophecy of her early death. As to his feeling with regard to the passion of love, my personal testimony is naturally confined to the impression I received in conversations prompted by the passing incidents of life, and certainly that impression is that it always stirred in him the deepest concern, and that there was no deficiency either in his comprehension of its nature or his estimate of its power. However, let me appeal to his writings. De Quincey, I remember, says that he could not imagine Wordsworth throwing himself at the feet of the woman whom he loved, and I say nothing to the contrary :

nor do I believe many of my hearers will think the worse of him for this. Indeed, some of you will recall how he exhorts the lover of the haughty Geraldine—

“ To crouch no more on suppliant knee,
 But scorn with scorn outbrave :
 A Briton even in love should be
 A subject not a slave.”

But, I think there is not a fair one before me, however exalted and exacting her notions may be on the subject, who will not be satisfied with his description of the happy-making power of love in his *Vaudracour and Julia* ; as the same poem powerfully depicts also its power to shatter and destroy, where counterbalancing energies are not called into action :—

“ Arabian fiction never fill'd the world
 With half the wonders that were wrought for him.
 Earth breathed in one great presence of the spring ;
 Life turned the meanest of her implements,
 Before his eyes, to price above all gold ;
 The house she dwelt in was a sainted shrine ;
 Her chamber-window did surpass in glory
 The portals of the dawn : all paradise
 Could by the simple opening of a door
 Let itself in upon him :—pathways, walks
 Swarmed with enchantment, till his spirit sank,
 Surcharged, within him, overblest to move
 Beneath a sun that wakes a weary world
 To its dull round of ordinary cares ;
 A man too happy for mortality !”

Again, the words—

“ There is a comfort in the strength of love ;
 'T will make a thing endurable, which else
 Would overset the brain or break the heart,”

though introduced in reference to paternal love, do not they alone prove that he had sounded the depth of the passion? I know that in the agony of more than one they have proved a precious support. And the admirable sonnet commencing—

“ Surprised by joy, impatient as the Wind
I turn'd to share the transport—Oh ! with whom
But thee deep-buried in the silent tomb ?”

recording the pang which attended the discovery that even for the least division of an hour it could have forgotten its object, expresses an experience of affection equally lively and profound.

Then where shall we meet with a nobler statement both of the moral purpose, and the moral conquest of love, than is contained in those lines of his *Lao-damia*, that poem in which Grecian statues come to life and breathe burning words?—

“ For this the passion to excess was driven
That self might be annull'd, her bondage prove
The fetters of a dream compared to love.”

And in another noble passage, he describes one of his themes as

“ — miserable love, that is not pain
To hear of, for the glory that redounds
Therefrom to human kind and what we are.”

It is true, indeed, that he had a very strong conviction of the necessity for a woman's happiness that her intellect should be cultivated in due balance with her affections, that the movements of the one should be made to interpenetrate those of the other ; it was

only thus, he believed, that the brightness and dignity of affection could be maintained in married life, or that the happiness of woman could be saved from complete shipwreck through bereavement or other disappointment. Another exaltation of love, still more indispensable, he fully recognised in lines which, as less known, I will repeat to you from *The Prelude*. Having said—

“ By love subsists
All lasting grandeur, by pervading love;
That gone, we are as dust ”—

after a few lines, he continues :—

“ In some green bower
Rest, and be not alone, but have thou there
The one who is thy choice of all the world :
There linger, listening, gazing with delight
Impassion'd, but delight how pitiable !
Unless this love by a still higher love
Be hallow'd, love that breathes not without awe ;
Love that adores, but on the knees of prayer,
By heaven inspired ; that frees from chains the soul,
Lifted in union with the purest, best,
Of earth-born passions, on the wings of praise
Bearing a tribute to the Almighty's Throne.”

In this connection, I may record that he repudiated, with something of indignation, the theory involved in the Miltonic line :—

“ He for God only, she for God in him :”

asserting for the woman a direct responsibility to God, as an essential incident of her moral dignity

and her immortal destiny, and insisting upon its being the part of the man's wisdom both fully to recognise that paramount obligation, and to respect generously, and enjoy genially, the free exercise of her individuality alike in the spheres of judgment and of taste.

As the quotations I have made will have served to vindicate him with the younger of my fair hearers, so will the observations I have now reported approve themselves, I believe, to the married ladies among my auditory: and there are two sonnets addressed to Miss Gillies on her Portrait of Mrs. Wordsworth, then in the autumn of her life, which will additionally satisfy them, that, whatever he was as a lover—and that we may leave in the mystery which is the right of every lover—his conjugal affection was of model-type. They are, indeed, touchingly beautiful:—

I.

“ All praise the likeness by thy skill portray'd;
 But 't is a fruitless task to paint for me,
 Who yielding not to changes Time has made,
 By the habitual light of memory see
 Eyes unbedimm'd, see bloom that cannot fade,
 And smiles that from their birth-place ne'er shall flee
 Into the land where ghosts and phantoms be;
 And seeing this own nothing in its stead.
 Couldst thou go back into far distant years,
 Or share with me, fond thought, that inward eye,
 Then, and then only, Painter! could thy Art
 The visual powers of nature satisfy,
 Which hold, whate'er to common sight appears,
 Their sovereign empire in a faithful heart.

II.

“ Though I beheld at first with blank surprise
This Work, I now have gazed on it so long,
I see its truth with unreluctant eyes ;
Oh my Beloved ! I have done thee wrong,
Conscious of blessedness, but whence it sprung,
Ever too heedless, as I now perceive ;
Morn into noon did pass, noon into eve,
And the old day was welcome as the young,
As welcome and as beautiful—in sooth
More beautiful as being a thing more holy :
Thanks to thy virtues, to the eternal youth
Of all thy goodness, never melancholy ;
To thy large heart and humble mind, that cast
Into one vision future, present, past.”

And now, that I may leave no class of my fair hearers without a special word from him, I will add that I have more than once heard him say that he habitually felt a peculiar attraction of respect and interest towards maiden ladies who had ceased to look forward to marriage, where he saw in them the combination of amiability and cultivated intellect, considering that their single state was presumably due either to some mortal desolating blow that called for silent sympathy, or to some self-sacrifice, noble even where it was mistaken, or to a self-respect which would not bow to an unworthy conjunction. And he regarded the functions they had to fulfil in social and family life as of precious value.

Adverting to the two ideals, which have recently been so ably expounded here in their reference to two living poets—that of obedience to law, and that of *the acting out of generous passions and aspirations—*

I think I may claim for Wordsworth, as also for Hartley Coleridge, that he blended in due proportion these two elements of moral excellence. I have mentioned Hartley Coleridge, because he beautifully touches the point when he speaks of the wise poet

“Wedding wild impulse to calm forms of beauty,
And making peace 'twixt liberty and duty.”

And Wordsworth has on the one hand declared that fixed moral laws are necessary to give moral dignity and consistency to character, and in his *Ode to Duty* has sung her praise in words which I trust are in the memories of most who hear me:—

“Stern Lawgiver ! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace,
Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face.
Flowers laugh before thee in their beds,
And fragrance in thy footing treads :”

yet, on the other hand, he recognises that what is *vital* in us is emotional :—

“We *live* by Admiration, Hope, and Love :
And even as these are well and wisely fix'd,
In dignity of being we ascend.”

Excur. B. iv.

“Whether we be young or old,
Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
Is with infinity and only there ;
With hope it is, hope that can never die,
Effort and expectation and desire,
And something evermore about to be.”

Prelude.

And often have I heard him contend against the false philosophy of the maxim, that "Religion ends where mystery begins."

I shall conclude these reminiscences by shortly meeting two charges which, in connection with Religion, I have known to be brought against Mr. Wordsworth. The first is the charge of Pantheistic doctrine, founded, I suppose, almost exclusively upon a beautiful passage in his *Tintern Abbey Lines*. I will indulge myself by reading the context, as well because it partly verifies what I have said as to his transition from an absorbing love of nature into a deeper sympathy with man, as because it has given rise to the charge before us. Referring to the days of his early youth, he says:—

" For Nature then

To me was all in all. I cannot paint
 What then I was. The sounding cataract
 Haunted me like a passion : the tall rock,
 The mountain and the deep and gloomy wood,
 Their colours and their forms were then to me
 An appetite—a feeling and a love,
 That had no need of a remoter charm,
 By thought supplied, nor any interest
 Unborrow'd from the eye. That time is past,
 And all its aching joys are now no more,
 And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
 Faint I, nor mourn, nor murmur ; other gifts
 Have follow'd, for such loss, I would believe,
 Abundant recompense. For I have learn'd
 To look on Nature not as in the hour
 Of thoughtless youth ; but hearing oftentimes
 The still sad music of humanity,

Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts: a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods
And mountains: and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye and ear,—both what they half-create
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.”

Now I quite agree in an opinion which has been here expressed, that there exists at present in some quarters a tendency to bring this accusation of Pantheism too lightly and too promiscuously. Where the doctrine is held in such a form as denies to Deity personality and will, and confounds the distinction between right and wrong, there indeed it is only a disguised Atheism, and it tends to bring back a frightful moral chaos. But oftentimes what is so stigmatised is only the meeting of the soul in its legitimate excursions with one presentation of that vast idea of the infinite and incomprehensible God, which if at one time it shines down upon our moral

sense like the sun in the firmament, at another time encircles us like the ocean-tide, and pours from all sides its waves into the recesses of our nature. An apostle, let us remember, has bequeathed to us the words, "in whom we live and move and have our being." Now Wordsworth, I can testify, was both a firm believer in a personal God—he was indeed a devout Christian worshipper—and was a man in whom the sense of right and wrong acted with singular vigour, engendering an almost exuberant amount of moral indignation, as all familiar with his noble patriotic sonnets will easily believe. It is true that when he wrote the passage I have repeated, his religious opinions were not developed into the form which they afterwards arrived at, and its concluding lines, taken by themselves, can scarcely admit of a satisfactory justification; but a recent perusal of that most interesting biographical poem, *The Prelude*, has proved to me that at no time did he identify God and Nature, or hold a laxer moral creed. The *Lines written above Tintern Abbey* were composed in the year 1798. The early books of *The Prelude* were written in 1799,* and they contain express recognition of a personal God;† and it is remarkable

* See dates attached to "*Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe*," (page 62, in one vol. edition,) which is extracted from Book I. of *The Prelude*, p. 19, and to "*There was a Boy; ye knew him well, ye cliffs*," (page 141 in one vol. edition,) which is extracted from Book V. of *The Prelude*, p. 122.

† See *The Prelude*, Book II. pp. 50, 60. Book V., p. 116. The last cited passage speaks of two paramount influences, one, "Nature's self, which is the breath of God," the other, "His pure Word by miracle revealed."

that the Ninth Book of *The Excursion*, first published in 1814, commences with a passage just as open to the charge of Pantheism as that which I have read, although it closes with devout acknowledgments of a personal God and of Christian faith, breathed forth, indeed, from the Pastor's mouth, but intended evidently to convey the poet's convictions; so that in his eyes there was no inconsistency between such a faith and a recognition of the ever-present, ever-acting "Soul of all the worlds." I do not hesitate, however, to add these words—let us not in reading a poet's works expect, or even desire, that in all their parts they should conform to a standard of orthodoxy. The record they contain of progress in thought and opinion, whether for good or ill, is one of the most valuable constituents of the works of poets; and those whose powers are the grandest, who in each successive field can make the widest and richest conquests, are often, through the necessary working of their nature, late in arriving at the end of their glorious labours, at the disposing and duly arranging in the Temple of the Supreme of the spoils they have amassed. Remembering that an essential function of the poet is to freshen and to vitalise our thoughts, we shall be wise in allowing him, and in asserting for him, an ample range, a free and large license to report to us his authentic experiences; and we may be assured that the more he is a true poet, the more he understands the conditions of his art, the more certainly will he refrain from disturbing the reverence which is at the foundation of religious faith, and

from outraging the moral feelings which are the best elements of our nature.

But by others who have brought no positive charge against him, Wordsworth has been blamed for not giving to the world specifically religious poetry, involving definite Christian doctrine. On this point I have frequently heard him express his views. With impressive earnestness and humility he used to declare that he had always felt himself unworthy to deal with matters so high and holy as the doctrines of the Christian faith. Having laid this down as the main reason of his own omission, he discussed the general question : he insisted upon the distinction, so often lost sight of, between religious poetry and versified religion ; disclaiming then agreement with Dr. Johnson, he recognised such religious poetry as, being the expression of religious faith in vital movement, was also informed by the poetic imagination ; but he asserted that the poet who wrote for his age, who addressed himself to the task of affecting the general heart, was debarred, if he would be successful in this aim, from using an instrumentality of doctrine beyond what the condition of generally accepted truth determined :—this for one thing :—and in the next place, that he was entitled and bound to consider what were the truths which, from his own peculiar genius and opportunities, he was specially fitted to clothe in forms of art, and to commend to the minds and feelings of others. And he conceived that in limiting himself to this *province* he incurred no just reproach, as if he were

necessarily unappreciative of other, which might be even higher truths. I believe this is perfectly valid both as a general argument, and as a particular defence; and I may illustrate it in reference to Wordsworth by a fact which I distinctly remember. I found him one day at Rydal Mount, much moved by a letter just received from a lady who resided at a distance, and who was quite unknown to him. She described herself as having been prostrated in health and spirits by family afflictions and by anxious worldly cares; the consequence of which had been that she had lost all interest in life, and, what grieved her most of all, had fallen into a state of spiritual deadness upon which the religious truths she had previously loved and treasured could produce no effect, either cheering or alarming. In this state she had taken up Wordsworth's poems; they brought her into a new world of thoughts and sensations; they acted as a blessed alterative of wholesome and invigorating influence, and after a time she was again able to pray and to enjoy her Bible. She had felt constrained to tell this to her personally unknown benefactor. Wordsworth, who cared as little for praise of his poetry as for censure of it, was, as I have said, deeply moved by this proof of its beneficial effect, and he quoted, with modest satisfaction, the words in which Keble had qualified it in a Latin dedication—"ad sanctiora erigit." He was willing to acknowledge that it was not sacred in the highest acceptance of the word, but he trusted that its in-

fluence would be ever such as would prepare the soul for truths holier than its own.

And we may receive it as the gift of a poet, who, if his style, from his over-care for accuracy, was sometimes over-weighted with the logical drapery of truth, has proved himself a great master of the English tongue, rich in felicities of expression, in those "jewels five-words-long," which, like proverbs, being the wit of one become the wisdom of many, who has given us a greater number of new thoughts than any other poet since Shakespeare, who, to use Matthew Arnold's words, has "taught us how to feel," both towards nature and towards man, by refreshing and deepening our primal sympathies with both, and has nourished within us habits of loving reverence and pure enjoyment.

You are many of you going soon to the country. His poems, if you study them aright, will help you, better than a novel, to receive all its best influences. Take your WORDSWORTH with you.





SPECIMEN
OF A
TRANSLATION OF VIRGIL.
BY
THE RT. REV. WILLIAM ALEXANDER, D.D.,
Lord Bishop of Derry and Raphoe.





SPECIMEN
OF A
TRANSLATION OF VIRGIL.

FVENTURE to submit to your notice to-day an attempt at a translation of the earlier part of the Sixth Book of the Æneid into the Spenserian metre. I say an attempt, for in a few distracted hours no one can do justice to a poet whose sense of finish was so exacting, that he made it his dying request that his Æneid should be burned as an imperfect and unfinished thing. Before making some remarks upon the book and upon the measure which I have adopted, I shall ask your permission to read, by way of preface, a brief study upon St. Augustine and Virgil.

ST. AUGUSTINE AND VIRGIL.

ONE of the best known passages of Christian antiquity is that in which Augustine reproaches himself with the fascination which Virgil had exercised over him in his boyhood. The student of Augustine lights upon much which leads him to conclude that the *Christian bishop never emancipated himself from*

the spell. The chain, of which the first link was set in motion in the school of rhetoric at Thagaste, continued to vibrate to the same touch through all the excitement of controversy and the labours of the episcopate. It may be interesting to consider the sides of Virgil's genius which rendered Augustine susceptible to his influence.

It must be confessed that Virgil's consummate taste and sense of form do not serve to answer our question. These are rarely the characteristics of a provincial society like the Roman-African, never of a civilization in decline, and of a language in the agonies of dissolution. Bad taste abounds in Augustine's writings, in perpetual antithesis, tortuous conceit, and grotesque disproportion of arrangement, be bad taste. Indeed, when the Saint exhibits good taste in his compositions, it is a moral quality, a Christian sentiment, not a literary tact. In reviewing a passage of the Confessions, the writer feels that he has been guilty of an extravagant expression. "I felt that my soul and his were one soul in two bodies," he exclaims, in describing his youthful sorrow for a school-fellow and friend. "Therefore," he adds, "I conceived a horror of life, because I was unwilling that I should live on a halved existence. And perhaps I was afraid to die for this reason, lest he whom I loved so tenderly should wholly die."* In his Retractations, Augustine condemns this hyperbole severely. "However qualified this impertinence may be by the insertion of the word *forte*, it seems

* Confess. iv. 6.

to me a purile piece of declamatory conceit rather than a grave confession."* The condemnation is one which taste must certainly approve. But it is dictated by a sentiment which is moral, not artistic.

The picturesqueness of Virgil must have had peculiar charms for Augustine. It is a picturesqueness in one important respect different from that of the earlier classical poets. By them Nature is described beautifully indeed, but coldly, with no more tenderness or enthusiasm than a piece of armour. We can understand as we read them how a man like Cæsar could have whiled away the tediousness of a passage across the Alps by writing a treatise upon grammatical analogy. Virgil's subjectivity gives to his description of bees, of light and waters, of trees and flowers, a certain modern tone, as of sympathy and fond observation. But this is one important element which Christianity was preparing for modern literature. The tone in which Nature is treated in modern times, though of late years not without Pantheistic intermixture, comes from the dogmas of Christianity. They who believe that Nature is God's creation and witness, that she is fallen and is to be restored, will not fail to survey her lovingly, minutely, and with trembling hope. In one or two passages of the Gospels, in Gregory and Basil among the Christian fathers, we seem to breathe the atmosphere and catch the voice of modern romance and poetry.

But the true centre of fascination in Virgil for a

* *Retract.* ii. 6.

nature like St. Augustine's must have been his infinite *tenderness*. From the recollection of Terence he recoiled at once with offended pride and wounded delicacy. He had learned to look, almost with indignation and contempt, upon the part of the professional rhetorician which he had so long filled. To be a "word-seller" was a meanness, in an age where there could be no eloquence, because there was no freedom. One of the favourite rhetorical exercises of the time was to give a boy a part of a poem to read off into prose. Few exercises could be better calculated to give copiousness of diction and fluency of expression. Now Terence was especially used to afford ground colours for the rhetorical style, which Augustine had learned to despise. More obvious reasons for his hatred of the writings of Terence are, their occasional obscenity, and their connection with a theatre which it was impossible to separate from the taint of Paganism, the voluptuous fascination of the spectacle, and the sanguinary fascination of the circus. It should be remembered that the poetry of Virgil had acquired, wherever Latin was spoken, a popularity which at first sight is surprising. Such exquisite finish, such chased and chiselled lines, are not, one would think, to be appreciated without culture. Yet verses of Virgil are scrawled on the poorest tombs among the catacombs, and scribbled upon the walls of Pompeii by the hands of the lowest of the people. Much of this may, doubtless, be due to the good fortune as well as genius of *the poet who first shapes the legends of a great*

people, and under whose subtle touch of healing the broken links of tradition are re-forged. Yet very much must lie in that *subjectivity* with which Virgil has so often been reproached, in that tenderness which, still more than his picturesqueness, makes him "the first of the moderns."* Of the three elements which critical analysis can detect in the *Æneid*, the Homeric, the national, and the personal, the last was the most fascinating then as now. The voice of exquisite sensibility which falters over the description of a work of art,

"Bis patriæ cecidere manus,"

will always find audience. The people applaud him who makes them laugh; the finer tribute of their love is reserved for him who teaches manhood to weep the delicious tears of which it is not ashamed. It is the want of sensibility which causes Dryden, the greatest rhetorician among our poets, to be so inadequate a translator of Virgil. "I fear," says Johnson, of Dryden, "that he would have given us but a coarse draft of Eloisa's passion." He has given us but a coarse draft of the grief of Orpheus in the episode which closes the fourth *Georgic*, and in many other passages which might be quoted. Augustine, the writer of the tenderest book that the world has ever seen, was a predestined enthusiast for Virgil. No tribute has ever been paid to the poet's genius, comparable to the sweet and burning tears shed by the imaginative boy, and for which the Christian

* M. Villemain.

Bishop so bitterly reproaches himself. "Tantillus puer, et tantus peccator."

No human conscience, not even that of a Saint, is perfectly consistent. Had the conscience of St. Augustine been so, he might have reproached himself in reference to Virgil, at later periods of his life. During the months at Cassiciacum, when he was preparing for baptism, Virgil is constantly mentioned in those dialogues which, with all their profound dissimilarity, remind us of Cicero and Plato. Upon the quiet Alpine slopes, in a land of lakes and hills overlooking the plains of Lombardy; in the meadow-lawn during those summer-days, which seem to give lucidity to the intellect as well as to the eye;* during the soft winter sunshine, in the baths near the villa; the cadence of Virgil's lines, sometimes declaimed by the poet Licentius, sometimes half-playfully repeated by Augustine, still mingles with the household cares of the little company, with Monica's gentle work, the voices of the vine-dressers, and the

* Et fortè dies ita serenus effulsit, ut nulli prorsùs rei magis quam serenandis animis nostris congruere videretur . . . paullulum cum rusticis egimus, quod tempus urgebat.—*Contra Acad.* ii. 426.—Disputare cessavere . . . diesque poenè totus, cum in rebus rusticis ordinandis, tum in recensione prim libri Virgillii peractus ruit.—*Ibid.* i. 418.—Exorto sole clarissimo invitavit coeli nitor, et quantum in illis locis hyeme poterat blanda temperies, in pratum descendere.—*De Ordin. Lib.* ii.—Tertius autem dies matutinas nubes quæ nos coegerant in balneos dissipavit tempusque pomeridianum candidissimum reddidit.—*De Betù Vitù.*—Septem ferè diebus, cum tres tantum Virgillii libros post primum recenseremus.—*Contr. Acad.* ii. 428.

lowings of the kine. Let us not condemn them. It is but the pleasant morning holiday. Before evening comes they always lift their eyes to those problems which tower before us all, in the nineteenth century as in the fourth, like the eternal hills. The retreat at Cassiciacum will soon be over. From the day of his baptism at Milan, to the day when he lies down to die in the little chamber at Hippo, with his eyes fixed upon the Psalms of David not upon the songs of Virgil, his *Æneid* is closed.

Yet the genius of a great poet asserts its prerogative over us, long after we cease to read him. At times the tenderest and most musical strains which Augustine has ever heard upon earth, mingle unconsciously with his recollections, even when he is listening to catch the strains that come to him from the City of God.*

II.

With regard to the measure which I have chosen.

So far as I know, three measures have been used by the translators of Virgil.

1. Professor Conington's recent work must make us give the first place to the octo-syllabic measure. That work stands too high in the estimation of

* In the *De Civ. Dei* there is a curious and unconscious Virgilian reminiscence:—"Sine ardoris illecebris et stimulo infunderetur gremio maritus uxoris." xiv. 26.—Cf. "Conjugis infusus gremio," *Æn.* viii. 406.

See also his Epistle to Jerome, (tom. ii. 69,) with its reference to Dares and Entellus.

scholars to need praise worth so little as my own. It is sufficient to say that, while those who know "small Latin and less Greek," can read it with real pleasure, the microscopic and usually malignant industry of critical scholars can scarcely detect a flaw.

Yet I am obliged to confess that the choice of the octo-syllabic measure seems to me to be an unhappy one, and to postulate its own failure. It suits exactly the genius of him who wrote :—

When civil dudgeon first grew high,
And folk fell out, they knew not why :

It gives point to the antitheses of the witty Dean, who made a well-known bequest to Dublin :—,

To show by one satiric touch,
No nation needed it so much.

But it can scarcely be so modulated as to give our ears an equivalent for the varied and long-drawn music of Virgil. I admit that Scott can do wonders with the octo-syllabic line, when the trumpet of battle is in his ears, or when his spirit gallops with the hunter in the storm of chase along the hills. I admit that Byron has at times breathed into it the tempest of his passion, and Wordsworth the chastened wisdom of his meditative morality. But I maintain that there are incurable defects in the measure for a long and serious poem. It cannot be sustained at a high pitch. Its fatal facility is a perpetual temptation. It reminds one too often of the dignity of a man extremely short and extremely fat,

who aims at impressiveness with a jerking hobble and an asthmatic grunt.

The two other measures which have been essayed by the translators of Virgil, are, the rhymed heroic couplet, as by Dryden and Pitt, and blank verse as by Dr. Henry and Mr. Sewell. Of these the former seems to me preferable, if the end of the translation be not to produce a semi-barbarous literality, but to give the general reader an impression of his original.

My chief desire in this attempt, which I made some years ago, was to stimulate some one with sufficient scholarship and poetical spirit to the task of rendering the *Æneid* in that stanza, into which Virgil seems to me most capable of being successfully moulded. The exigencies of the stanza, no doubt, impose peculiar difficulties upon the translator. But it may be made to answer every mood of the poet, majesty or tenderness, pregnant pathos, or flowing description, while it is peculiarly tolerant of that archaic colouring in which the genius of Virgil delights.

I have chosen the Sixth Book, simply because I have always felt a peculiar interest in the descent of *Æneas* into the infernal regions; in the picture of the Sybil with the fever upon her cheeks and the foam upon her lips; in the charming description of the golden branch; in the exquisite lines that close the book. The critics may find fault with "demonstrable inconsistencies or confusions." But when I am pointed to such inconsistencies, as the

intimation, that the rivers, one of them ninefold, had to be passed by any one wishing to enter the infernal world, while Virgil might lead us to suppose that Æneas only passed one, I turn upon the critic. In the *chiaro-obscuro* and shadowy horror of that world, we are not to expect precision and definiteness. It reminds one of the tastelessness of those astute commentators, who, in a far holier region, ask how the harpers can hold both harps and vials, and who construct plans of the Heavenly Jerusalem. Nor am I much moved by accusations of plagiarism. Bossuet and Massillon never seem more original than when they are borrowing Augustine or Chrysostem. We answer the accusers in Virgil's own words, "Let them, try to steal from themselves, as they say I have stolen for myself."

VIRGILLI ÆNEIS. LIB. VI. 1—281.

ANGLICE REDDITA.

I.

So he speaks weeping, and speeds on full sail,
 To Cumæ, the Eubœan city hoar.
 Oceanward safe at last from surf and gale
 The sailors turn their prows. Their perils o'er,
 The anchor stays them, and they rock no more.
 Far, far along with ships the strand is lined,
 The merry men leap on the Hesperian shore :
 Part strike the seeds of flame from flints, part wind.
 Swift through the leafy lairs and forest fountains find.

II.

But good Æneas seeks the shrine exalted
Where in his glory on the mountain height
Apollo rules,—and the weird cave o'ervaulted
With the far secrecy of awful night,
The Sibyl's home. Her mighty mind and sprite
The Delian seer doth evermore inspire,
And touch the opening future with his light.
They enter Trivia's groves, and much admire
The Temple's dazzling lines, fretted with golden fire.

III.

They say self-exiled Dædalus going forth
From Minos' realms with pinions swift and bold
Dared trust him to the sky, and swam far North
Way unattempted ! to the Arcti, cold.
Lightly at last oe'r Cumæ's ancient hold
Self-poised he hung, and first from air set free
Treading this firm green earth, his vow enroll'd
To dedicate the wings that oar'd the sea
Of the blue sky, in fanes, O Phœbus, built for thee !

IV.

The fane is built—lo ! the doors sculptured here,
Androgeos' death. This side the Athenians stand,
Ah me ! in act to yield their seven a year.
The urn is there ; the lot is in the hand.
Opposite answers the fair Gnossian land

Ridged o'er the ocean with its rise and fall.
 Behold! the beautiful bull, the evil-plann'd
 Adultery of Pasiphaé, and withal
 The twy-form'd child, the pledge of love unnatural.

v.

Here too stands sculptured the much-labour'd place,
 The tangled labyrinth. Well the sculptor told
 How Ariadne's love-pangs won her grace
 From Dædalus. Within his hands behold
 Guiding blind steps the thread that might unfold
 The maze.—O Icarus! thou would'st prevail
 In that fair piece to win large space of gold.
 But sorrow marr'd his art—to carve the tale
 A father's hands twice o'er were raised, twice o'er to
 fail.

vi.

All this had they perused with eager eyne.
 Had not Achates come, and by his side
 Priestess and prophetess, of birth divine
 Deiphobe. “Not this the time or tide,
 O King;” she said, “on metal glorified
 By sculpture to stand eye-charmed. Rather crave
 The hour and the god, seven steers by yoke un-
 tried,
 Seven ewes of ritual meetness.” These they have
 Full soon, and follow her down to her mountain-
 cave.

VII.

An antre in a scour of the old world—
A hundred subterranean avenues broad
Lead to its hundred mouths, whence back is hurl'd
The Sibyl's hundred-echoed voice. They trod
The threshold, when "The God! behold the god!
'Tis time to interrogate the Fates," she said;
And saying neither face nor hair abode
In natural wise—apant she was with dread,
And all her long hair stood abristle on her head.

VIII.

Taller she looked of stature ;—superhuman
The volume and the music of her tone ;—
The inspiration of a mortal woman
Breathed by a Deity now nearer grown
"Cease not!" she cries; "thy prayers, thy vows
make known.
Not without this of darkness shall yon gate
Astonish'd ope, for things inanimate own
The power of prayer."—She ceased. Chill fear
thereat
Curl'd those iron frames: with accents passionate.

IX.

From his deep heart their King made supplication:
"O Phœbus; pitiful of Troy's unrest,
Who gav'st the Dardan shaft its inclination
Right from the hand of Paris to the breast
Of great Æcides! Lands the loneliest

In old mysterious Afric, Thee for guide,
 Wild fields long-stretch'd by sand-banks low of
 crest
 Has my bark touch'd, and regions wild and wide
 Silverly ring'd around by the untravell'd tide.

X.

“And now at last our breath is on the brow
 Of Italy ; we grasp the fair form flying
 O'er the blue sea illusive. Until now
 Troys fortune follows us. Your heavy-lying
 Vengeance from Ilium, no more defying
 Your godhead by her glory, adverse powers !
 Remove. And thou, with voice prophetic crying,
 Let rest my people (Lo ! we ask but ours),
 And my disquieted gods at last in Latium's bowers.

XI.

“So twins Latonian ! shall a marble shrine
 Of massy proof to ye be dedicate.
 So shall dawn days of song and sun and wine,
 Festivities within my future state—
 Call'd by the name of Phœbus. Thee await
 Thee too, O Sibyl places deep and dread,
 And chosen men, to keep thy words of fate.
 Only these awful lines of thine be said,
 Not written on light leaves by wild winds scatterèd.”

XII.

But like the steed untaught to bear its master
 Plunges the seer, if so, be she may skill

To fling the Presence from her. He, the faster,
On the foam'd mouth and fierce heart pressing still,
Wearies her out, and curbs her at his will.
The hundred entrances open suddenly,
And on the breezes doth this answer thrill :
“ The land hath wilder storms than sweep the sea ;
Safe from the perilous deep these storms are waiting
thee.”

XIII.

“ Ah ! to Lavinium (this thou need'st not dread)
The sons of Darnanus shall come, full fain
That they had come not. Battles, and battle-red
With foam discolour'd, I behold amain
The Tyber rolling—On that fatal plain
Camps shall not want ; nor yet another river,
New Simois or Xanthus ; nor again
A new and goddess-born Achilles,—never
Shall Juno cease to haunt thy hated race for ever.

XIV.

“ Then in those days, calamitous indeed,
Alliances thy pride shall stoop to sue ;
The cause of so much woe again decreed
A foreign bride, unto the Trojans true.
But thou, what ills soe'er may come anew,
Bate not a jot of heart or hope—nor cease
To go right forward, as the boldest do
Far as their fortune. The first way of Peace,
Little as thou may'st deem, comes from the side
of Greece.”

XV.

With such like sentences the Sibyl sings
 Dree in her voiceful cave, and darkly weaves
 Her words obscure round truly boded things.
 Such rein, such goad hath Phoebus. But wher
 leaves
 The inspiration the wild heart it heaves
 And the pale lips, quieted, foam no more,
 Begins Æneas, "Nought here freshly grieves,
 No new face unexpected rises o'er
 The sea of woe. My heart has traversed it before.

XVI.

"One only boon, since here is the hell-portal,
 The shadowy marish, Acheron's overflow ;
 Ah ! let me see my dear sire's face immortal,
 And teach thou me the way that I must go.
 Him from the city flaming far below
 I bare upon these shoulders, shaft and dart
 Raining by thousands after. Winds that blow
 Angrily o'er the seas we sail'd athwart,
 Heaven that he braved with me, was this an old
 man's part ?

XVII.

"By his command I come with supplication ;
 Pity a son and father ! So 'twere meet ;
 For not in vain hath Hecate thy station
 Fix'd o'er the under-world. By those most sweet
 Harp-strings of his, if Orpheus won to greet

His consort's ghost ; if Pollux walketh well,
For brother-love, with oft-returning feet
Death's awful road ; what boots me now to tell
Theseus, Alcides, and my birth of miracle ?”

XVIII.

He said, and grasp'd the altar. She spake then :
“ Not to descend (descent most easy is !)
Child of the blood of gods and godlike men !
Not to descend (for evermore dark Dis
Keeps his gates open)—up from the abyss,
Earthward to walk, and feel the upper breeze,
This is the work of works, the labour this.
None have attain'd it, save few souls who please
Kind Jove, by virtue borne to starry palaces.

XIX.

“ All the vast interspace is night-black forest,
Embay'd by dark Cocytus round and round.
If then that toil, the emptiest yet sorest,
So please thy spirit, twice to wander bound
Across the Styx, twice see the shadowy ground,—
Hear what thou hast to do. A bough all golden
Lieth perdue in a thick tree. The encrown'd
Hell-empress claims it. All the forest's olden
Immeasurable depths about the boughs are folden.

XX.

“ But none without the gathering of the tree's
Growth that hath golden leafage ever may

Enter that obscure country. So decrees

She who demands the gift—Proserpina.

Ever as one such bough is rent away

Leafs me another of the self-same stuff.

Look well ; pluck quickly. Eathes it follows aye

Whom the fates favour. Otherwise no rough

Effort can conquer it; no steel is sharp enough.

XXI.

“ Now whilst thou lingerest here inquiring much,

A friend's corpse lies unburied by the foam

Unknown to thee; and Death's defiling touch

The fleet contaminates. First it doth become

To bear the dead man to his own long home.

Bring dark-hued victims, expiate the dead.

So through the Stygian realm thy feet may roam.”

Long silence kept she when these words were said :

Æneas left the cave, downcast, in drearihead.

XXII.

Much he revolves these issues dark and blind,

Much with his dear Achates, faithful mate

Who treads beside, with equal cares of mind,

Surmises, what companion deadly fate

May have incurr'd—who lies in such estate.

Behold ! they see Misenus on the strand

By deed unworthy done to death of late.

None better breathed the brass; that master-hand

Brave hearts hath often thrill'd and flames of battle
fann'd.

XXIII.

Once with his spear and clarion, in glory
He used to walk the thickest of the fight
Great Hector's comrade. But when Hector gory
Lay by Achilles slain, the heroic wight
Followed Æneas, no inferior light.
Now while he challenges the gods eterne
With bugle blowing o'er the sea forth right,
Him, as they tell, did Triton overturn
Where through the circling rocks the waves for ever
churn.

XXIV.

All mourn, Æneas chief. Tears on each face,
They do what Sibyl bids. As altars look
So looks the pyre. They range an antique chase.
Fall the funereal pines; with many a stroke
The ilex sounds, wedge-cloven is the oak,
Down from the hills the mountain ash they rend.
Æneas girt him for the work and spoke,
Sadly his thoughts revolving while he kenn'd
The immeasurable world of wood without an end.

XXV.

“Ah! if the golden bough upon that tree
By tell-tale glinting were made visible
Through the great forest! All too well of thee,
Misenus, did the seer her bodement spell,
Good should there come too from the oracle.”

Scarce said, when lo ! from heaven with sweet accord
Twin doves flew down (full easy could he tell
His mother's birds) and flash'd on his regard,
And lightly settled down upon the grass-green sward

XXVI.

Joyful he prays, " Fly gently, doves, most fair,
An' there be way, O gently fly and guide
Your happy course directing through the air
To the rich turf that ever doth abide
As by the very shadow glorified
Under the Bough miraculous. Mother mine,
Goddess and mother, at this doubtful tide
Fail not thy son." He halted with strain'd eyne,
Watching what course they took, expectant of a sign

XXVII.

Graceful they glided on with many a pause,
Now fluttering, now feeding,—never lost
Quite from his ken, till o'er Avernus' jaws,
Whose pitchy breath by light wing is uncross'd,
Lapsing through liquid air upon their most
Desired seat, the enchanted tree, they sit.
There through the duller boughs one gold-emboss'd
The flickering air about it finely lit,
Twinkled atween the leaves, discolour exquisite.

XXVIII.

Like as in winter cold in sylvan places,
No produce of its tree, comes a strange green,

And round great stems, like pillars, interlaces
Its delicate network's crocus-colour'd sheen,—
Like as the mistletoe in wood is seen,
Such on the shadowy ilex-tree withal
Look'd the gold growing its dark leaves between;
So came there to the low wind's rise and fall
Metallic tinkling thin and faintly musical.

XXIX.

It, seeming loth to part, incontinent
Æneas plucks and to the Sibyl brings.
But on the shore the Teucri made lament,
And to the ashes made their offerings
That have no gratitude for mortal things.
A pyre funereal high aloft they raise,
All rich and resinous for the fire's strong wings.
Dark leaves enweave it. Trophies of his frays,
O'er cypresses of bale they hang his arms ablaze.

XXX.

Part haste the boiling caldron all a-bubble,
Wash the cold corpse, anoint it, and make moan.
Then on the bed that never shall know trouble
They place the limbs, and over them are thrown
The purple vestments that are so well known,
Part stoop below the bier (a woeful toil !)
Holding the torch averse, as erst was done.
Fiercely and yet more fierce do the flames boil
With frankincense flung in and flesh and cups of
oil.

XXXI.

After the fallen flame had ceas'd to burn,
They pour'd wine on the ashes all athirst ;
And Corynæus in a brazen urn
Gather'd the bones, his comrades thrice aspers'd
With dew from happy olive, ere he durst
Breathe the last words. Æneas on a hoar
Headland the arms, wherein the man was versed,
Hung high above his sepulchre, trump and oar.
The Trumpeter's name that cliff beareth for ever-
more.

XXXII.

This done, he executes the seer's behest.
There was a grotto pebble-strewn and vast,
Safe was it folded by the inkiest
Of lakes, and shadows falling thick and vast
From the great woods. Above it never pass'd
Bright bird unstricken, such a reek there goes
From its jaws ever to the sky o'er cast.
Four dark-back'd steers the maid doth now dispose,
And pours the sacred wine slope down between their
brows.

XXXIII.

Taking atop the bristly tufts betwixt
Their horns, she gives the fire the first libation,
Invoking Hecate whose sway is fix'd
In heaven and hell. The others in their station

Bring knives. The spiriting blood for expiation
They catch in bowls. Æneas smites amain
A dark-fleeced lamb, the due propitiation
To the great daughters of old Chaos twain,
A barren heifer too for Hecate is slain.

xxxiv.

Thus does he auspicate to the Stygian sire
His altar of the night, and minister
For the steers' entrails, heap'd upon the fire,
The outpour'd oil. Lo! many a mountain spur
With all its woods is wondrously astir,
Soon as the dawn begins to streak the dark,
And as the Goddess'-presence nears, for her
Bellows the earth, and through the shadows, hark!
Deep-baying all the hounds of hell begin to bark.

xxxv.

"Far hence," the prophetess exclaims, "far hence
Be ye who are profane, from all the land!
Much need, Æneas, of the heroic sense
And the firm soul. March onward, sword in
hand!"

She said, and plunged into the cave, and grand
With fearless steps he follow'd her right on.

Gods of the manes! voiceless shadows! wann'd
And silent places lighted of no sun,
Oh! suffer me to speak, Chaos and Phlethon.

XXXVI.

Darkling they walk'd beneath the lonely night,
 On through the shadows, through the tenantless
 homes,
 Realms unsubstantial. Look! such dubious light,
 Malign and chequer'd, to the traveller comes
 Belated far a-forest, when there glooms
 Rather than shines a moon in clouded skies
 Upon a colourless world. Before the rooms
 Hell's antechambers couchant, there he eyes
 Sorrow and Conscience's avenging mysteries.

XXXVII.

Yon is the home of Sickness, pale and pining,
 Old Age and Fear and Famine, that can win
 To evil deed,—of Poverty entwining
 Misery with Shame,—of Death and Labour's din,
 And Sleep, Death's brother and his next of kin.
 Over against them, and against the lair
 Of those Ill Joys that are the foulest sin,
 War on the threshold stands,—and Discord there,
 With ribbons blood-bedropp'd wove through her
 snaky hair.





